BUNT AND BILL

CLARA MULHOLLAND

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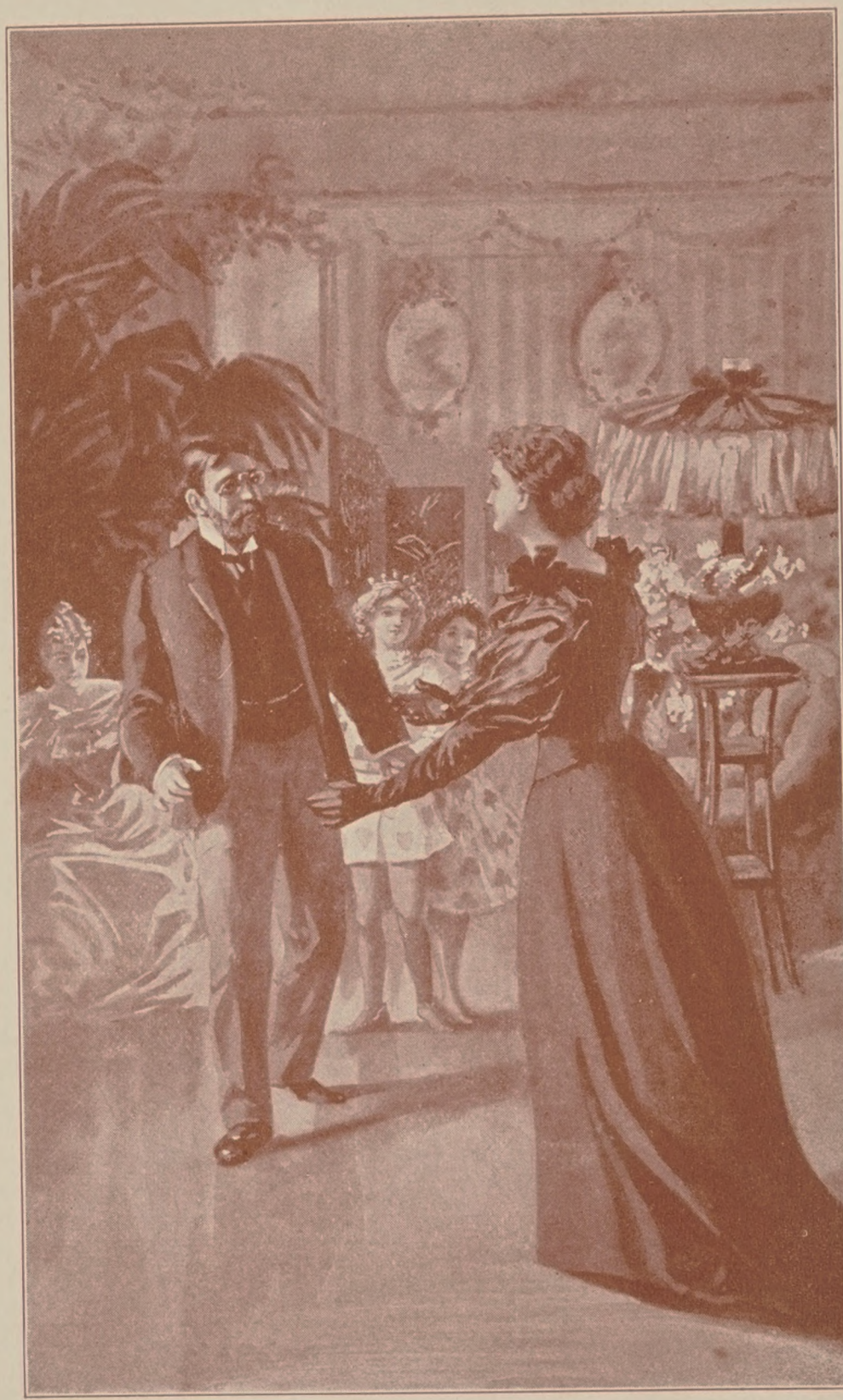

"SHE RAISED HER EYES TO HIS, GAVE A SUDDEN GASP, AND LOOKED AT HIM CLOSELY; THEN UTTERED A LITTLE CRY AMD CAUGHT HIS HAND." (*See page 152.*)

BUNT AND BILL.

BY

CLARA MULHOLLAND.

NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO:

BENZIGER BROTHERS,

Printers to the Holy Apostolic See.

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BUNT AND BILL.

CHAPTER I.

TIDDLEDY WINKS AND THE GREAT MOWGLI.

BUNT was trembling with excitement. Her dark eyes were sparkling. Her chubby cheeks, red as two round rosy apples, were hot and burning, and her usually merry, laughing mouth was as solemn as solemn could be.

"I love the game of Tiddledy Winks. It's so exciting," she cried, after, for her, an extraordinarily long silence. "But oh!" with a little gasp, "I'd be so pleased if I could beat Bill."

"That you won't do," said a sturdy blue-eyed boy, with a complexion like a ripe peach, laughing mockingly. "You fancy

yourself good at the game, my sweet one, but you're not a match for me—yet."

"You'll see if I'm not," his sister cried. "Just wait. I'll be back when my turn comes. But I simply must wash my hands." And she darted out of the room.

"Put your head under the pump, or the cold water tap in the dressing-room," Bill called after her. "That will cool you down a bit, old girl." And he hopped the bone counters into the small wooden cup with the greatest ease.

"I think I must stop Tiddledy Winks altogether," a sweet voice said, and Mrs. Maybank looked across the room at her little son and two tall, slim girls of thirteen and fourteen, who were seated round the table. "Bunt gets so excited over it, that really, I don't think it's good for her."

"Bunt is a muff," replied Bill. "But indeed, mother, the excitement won't do her any harm—and it's such a jolly good game."

"Don't be uneasy about Bunt," laughed Dr. Maybank, approaching the table. "She's all right. She's an earnest little thing, and throws herself heart and soul into whatever she is doing. But don't talk, Bill, or you'll lose. Concentrate your attention, my boy. If you want to succeed at anything, you must do that."

"Yes, father—but this is so easy." Bill giggled and wriggled about on his chair. His thoughts wandered away from the game; his fingers lost their accuracy, and the counters flew here and there; everywhere but into the cup.

"You're beaten. Clarice is the champion," cried Lucy Lonergan, clapping her hands. "You were so conceited, Bill, that you deserved to lose."

"You have lost, simply because you did not take pains and keep your mind on the game, Bill," said his father. "What's worth doing at all, my boy, is worth doing well. You have thrown away the championship

through your carelessness. Now, if Bunt beats Clarice, she'll have beaten you."

"That's not likely," said Bill, annoyed at his failure. "Bunt's only a baby. But here she is, so we'll soon see. I'll back Clarice to win in a canter."

Bunt came in very quietly. All her excitement was gone. Her face was cool, her hands steady, and there was a look of calm determination in her brown eyes as she walked across the room.

"Sit down, Bunt. It's your turn now," her father said, glancing admiringly at the sweet earnest face and slim little figure of his nine-year-old daughter. "Do you like a high or a low chair, dear?"

"Neither, thank you, father. I prefer to stand," she replied quietly, taking up her position at the end of the table.

It was a close game. Clarice played well, and having just beaten Bill, who was generally the best performer at the "Tiddledy Winks" table of all the children she knew,

she was certain of defeating his younger sister, Miss Bunt, very speedily.

Not a word was spoken, and the room was so still and quiet that one might almost have heard a pin drop as the game proceeded. One after the other the counters flew into the cup, first from Clarice, then from Bunt, till at last, only some three or four remained of each color. Two lying close to the side of the cup were sent in with great skill by the small girl, and the elder trembled nervously; then hopped her counter to a distant corner of the table.

Very steadily, her eyes fixed upon her work, Bunt continued, and with great accuracy sent her counters straight to their destination. As the last rattled into the cup, Clarice looked round with a rueful countenance. Five still remained to her, and she saw with disgust that she was beaten, ignominiously beaten, by this child, four years her junior.

"Bravo, little one!" Dr. Maybank cried,

delighted. "The victory is yours. And you have won it by keeping your head cool, and fixing your attention on what you were doing. I trust, Master Bill, that you will take a lesson from your younger sister. But don't fret, Clarice, you played very well, only Mistress Bunt was one too many for you." And he caught his little daughter in his arms and carried her over to her mother, humming, "See the Conquering Hero Comes."

Clarice shook back her long mane of fair hair, and laughed gaily.

"I'm glad she won," she said, magnanimously. "She deserved it. I wish I could keep so cool."

"It was the pump did it," cried Bill. "We'll put our heads under it next time we are going to play. Why, she was wild with excitement and as red as a peony till she went to the water. Believe me, there's nothing like a cold douche for settling one's nerves and keeping one's head cool."

"Thank you," Clarice cried, making a wry face. "No cold water cure for me. Short-haired folk like you and Bunt may do that sort of thing. But Lucy and I would be like a pair of drowned rats, if we played such pranks with our hair."

"Poor dears, yes. Shall I," snatching up a pair of scissors, "cut off a few yards, and so cool your aching brows?"

"If you dare!" Clarice uttered a shriek of well-feigned terror, and darted off across the big, wide, oak-panelled hall, out through the open door, down the broad stone steps, and away over the beautiful sunlit lawn.

"Let us fly back to our wigwams," cried Bill, catching up a paper cap decorated with goose-quills and red and white streamers. "The great chieftain, Mowgli, shows us the way."

"Where you lead, we follow," replied Lucy and Bunt, pulling caps, something like his, tightly over their ears. "You," bowing low, "are our master."

"Good. Pick up your blunderbusses. We'll fight the great Mowgli—and win."

And he dashed down the steps, yelling and shouting and brandishing a big stick.

"Three against one's not fair," laughed Lucy. "What do you say, Bunt?"

"Hardly. But what can we do?"

"You might turn Mowgli's knight."

"She wouldn't let me. See, they're at it already. Ah!" waving her stick over her head. "We must get into our wigwam."

"Or die in the attempt," cried Lucy. "Come on, Chimpo Ching, and fight your best."

"Yes, Chino Chink, I will. Lead on."

And the two little girls ran shouting and whooping over the grass.

As they approached the largest wigwam, a little hut made out of the branches of a big low-growing willow tree, and covered in with a large railway rug, they saw Bill prostrate on the ground, while Clarice stood over him, her foot upon his neck.

"He is my prisoner," she cried. "Chimpo Ching and Chino Chink, the great Mowgli calls upon you to surrender. Give up your blunderbusses, and swear to keep the peace."

"What says our lord and master Hibungulta?" they asked, their eyes twinkling with fun, their lips twitching, as they tried hard to keep grave, and speak in the tone of voice suitable for the occasion.

"Peace—keep the peace," stammered Hibungulta from the grass. "The great Mowgli has invited us to lunch. Biscuits and toffee are on our table. Chimpo Ching and Chino Chink, we can not refuse such dainties."

"Assuredly not so," handing their sticks to Clarice, "here are our blunderbusses, most noble Mowgli. We are your knights, if you will receive us as such."

"Honor forbids me to accept such a sacrifice," Mowgli said, solemnly. "The great Hibungulta must not be left without his

army. But come in," she took her foot from Bill's neck, "come in, in all friendship, and partake of my dainty lunch." And with a burst of laughter, she led the way under the rug.

"A truce to all fighting till the inner man is regaled," said Hibungulta, squatting cross-legs upon the ground within the wigwam.

"So say I," replied Mowgli. "Neither chieftain nor knight should face a foe when hungry and tired. And I am both. That difficult and lengthy encounter at 'Tiddledy Winks,' with that most skilful performer, Miss Bunt Maybank, has left me weak and prostrate."

Bunt blushed to the roots of her hair.

"Oh, Clarice!"

The elder girl looked round the wigwam with a searching glance; then said with a sigh of relief:

"The Mowgli was startled. But she sees there is no Clarice here. For a moment

she feared an invasion of the white men. But, come; eat, pretty creatures, eat. Chimpo Ching, Chino Chink, and Hibungulta, the most noble Mowgli calls on you to eat." And she handed round large green cabbage leaves, upon which were neatly arranged biscuits, cakes, and packets of toffee.

"May your shadow never grow less, fair and wonderful Mowgli," said Hibungulta, his peach-like face all wreathed in smiles. "Peace and plenty, cakes and toffee, are more to my taste than war. Let us be friends now and forever."

"The friendship that comes of cup-board love, oh, Hibungulta, is little to my taste as a rule, but at present," with a wave of her hand, "peace suits my humor. I too, wish to enjoy my cakes and toffee, and so am willing for a temporary suspension of our fighting. What say the most noble knights Chimpo Ching and Chino Chink?"

"We agree. You use big words, Mowgli," said Chimpo Ching, "but I have explained

to my young friend, Chino Chink, that 'temporary suspension' means stopping for a while, and she agrees to do so. Now, pass the toffee this way."

"One little word is wanting, Chimpo Ching. In wigwam as in battle-field, a noble savage must be polite."

"A noble savage polite! Oh, oh," laughed Chimpo Ching. "Mowgli, you are too funny—quite too funny."

"It's better to laugh than to cry," Mowgli said with upturned eyes and a merry giggle. "Shall I sing you a little song about that, that I once heard a white man sing?"

"Hear, hear! A song, Mowgli, a song," they cried, stamping their feet noisily.

"Good. I like to please my friendly savages," and raising her sweet little voice, Mowgli sang:

"A contented mind is a blessing kind,
And a merry heart is a purse well-lined,
So what care I, let the world go by,
For it's better far to laugh than to cry."

"That's from 'La Poupee,'" cried Chino Chink. "It's so pretty."

"Hurrah!" shouted Bill, "you're a first-rate singer, Mowgli. But there's not a word about politeness in your song that I could hear."

"I never said there was. But gay and well-conducted people, I repeat, whether white or black, should be polite. Gay first, polite afterwards."

"A regular stump orator," chuckled Bill. "Next time your Uncle Charles Lonergan, M.P., is going to speak in Parliament, just you give him a wrinkle or two, oh, most eloquent Mowgli."

"I scorn your base insinuations, Hibungulta," she answered with a wave of her hand. "Bow and salaam, Chimpo Ching, and say please, and the toffee and cakes are at your disposal."

"Most gracious and noble Mowgli, please allow me to regale myself with the largest cake and finest piece of toffee you possess."

"Here they are. Your obedience pleases me mightily. An obedient soldier is of more value to his chief than even a brave one."

"Ho, ho! Don't expect too much, Mowgli," cried Hibungulta, with laughing eyes. "But, hark! What's that? Methinks I hear music. What can it be?"

"Merry tunes that will make us glad," cried Mowgli. "Lay aside your war-paint, my comrades in arms, and let us away, to see whence come these most enchanting strains."

"We will, Mowgli. To obey you is sweet," cried Chimpo Ching, throwing aside her cap and stick. "I'm longing to see what that music is."

"Do nothing rash. One last word let me whisper in your ears—all," said Mowgli, with upraised hands. "If it is an organ, and upon it there should be, oh, Hibungulta, one of thy more hairy brothers, approach him not."

"I like that! My hairy brothers, indeed!

Monkeys are as nearly related to you as to me."

"Perhaps—'tis hard to say. But, peace, friend, peace. And now, let's away far from our beloved wigwams. In the white man's country we cease to be Mowgli, Chimpo Ching, Chino Chink, and Hibungulta, and become Clarice, Lucy, and their charming and entertaining young friends, Bunt and Bill."

"To the front of the house—that's where the music is," they cried in a chorus, and off they ran full of excitement and curiosity. In this quiet country place a traveling organ or band was a most unusual occurrence, and always hailed with delight when it appeared. But this music was softer and sweeter than anything they had ever heard, and the children wondered greatly what on earth it could be, as they flew over the lawn, and round to the big carriage sweep in front of the hall door.

CHAPTER II.

"A LITTLE STROLLING FAIRY."

As Dr. Maybank watched the children run across the beautiful hall, and heard the last sounds of their merry voices as they darted out into the sunshine, he smiled; then sighed heavily.

"How happy they are," he said. "How full of life and fun."

His wife laughed softly.

"Dear things! You would not have them old before their time, John?"

"God forbid. I would keep them young, innocent, happy always, if I could. But when I see Bunt and Bill merry and full of spirits, my mind goes back to the old days, when Marion and I were equally gay—without care or trouble, and loved each other."

"Poor John! I know you often long to meet your dear sister again."

"Long! I crave, I implore God to allow me to find her. She was so brave, so unselfish—going out to work and struggle in a new world to relieve me of the burden of keeping her when I was poor, that now that I am well off, making a fortune, my one great desire is to find Marion and give her every happiness possible."

"She knows all about you, I suppose?"

"I trust so; but hardly know. For a time I wrote everything fully. Then, as you know, I did not write at all."

"Yes. And you have made all inquiries?"

"All. I have put in advertisements. Have" he strode up and down the room, his hands behind his back, "set the police to work both in England and America, but have failed to find a clue. Living or dead, I can hear nothing of my sister."

"It is certainly very strange. But she may have married, and so changed her name."

"I have thought of that, and somehow

the idea does not help me much. In fact, it almost makes me despair of ever finding her. Our sweet Bunt——"

"Call her Cynthia, John." He smiled.

"Bunt suits her best, and comes more naturally. Wait till she grows into a stately young lady, with long skirts, before we call her by such a fine name."

"Then it will be too late to change, and I dislike nicknames."

"'Pet names' sounds better. But since you wish it, I will say Cynthia. Well, the child reminds me strangely of Marion. To-day, with her eager, earnest face as she played that game, I felt as though it were my sister I was watching."

"She is not like her in face, is she?"

"No. But in character she resembles her wonderfully. Dear little Bunt! She will never be called upon to leave her home and work for her bread in a distant land."

"I trust not. But she'd do it as bravely as Marion did, I believe."

"God bless her, yes. And now I must go and see Nichols. He hoped to have some good news for me to-day." And he hurried away.

"Poor John!" Mrs. Maybank sighed. "You are taking this greatly to heart just now. And it is disappointing, certainly. But please God you will soon hear news of your sister. I have prayed, the children have prayed. Our novena to Our Lady of Good Counsel is only over to-day. I am full of hope." And taking out her work-basket, she settled herself to finish a little frock she was making for a poor child.

Outside, the sun was intensely hot. The bees hummed, the butterflies darted hither and thither among the flowers, and the birds flitted silently from branch to branch, feeling the atmosphere too heavy for either song or roulade. Lulled by the coolness of the big, pleasantly shaded hall, and the soft stillness of the hot world beyond, Mrs. Maybank's work soon dropped from her fingers,

and all unconsciously, she fell to dreaming.

Fourteen years before, when she had first met John Maybank, he was a poor medical student. His father and mother were dead, his only sister working hard as a governess in America. He was quite alone and very lonely, till her father made his acquaintance, and seeing that he was clever and deserving, took him by the hand and helped him in every way he could. After this, things had gradually improved with him. Brilliantly talented, steady, honorable and industrious, every one trusted and respected him, and he soon began to get on splendidly in his profession. Then had come their marriage, the birth of their children, and long happy years of happiness and prosperity. From the hour of their engagement the number of wealthy patients increased daily, and everything went well with them. They had a beautiful home, more money than they required, and numbers of good

and devoted friends. Had it not been for John's anxiety about his sister, with whom he longed to share his happiness and good fortune, they would have been without a care in the world.

In the early days of their separation the brother and sister had written to each other by every mail. But gradually the correspondence languished. John, moving about from place to place, put off answering Marion's letters. Absorbed in his work, he forgot to write from week to week, till at last he remembered with a shock that he had not heard from her for months, and had lost her address. So the time passed, and although every now and again Dr. Maybank made great efforts to discover his sister, for years no tidings of her or her whereabouts had reached him. Then, apparently reconciled to the idea that there was nothing more to be done, he seldom mentioned her name, and his wife fancied he had forgotten her. But of late he had grown restlessly uneasy

again. He upbraided himself for past negligence, and had set to work with renewed vigor to do all he could think of that would be likely to bring her news of him. Still his efforts, as we have seen, met with no success, and hardly knowing what further steps to take he almost despaired of ever finding her. As all this passed through Mrs. Maybank's mind, she sighed, then rebuked herself for doing so.

"God is good, and will, I am sure, hear our prayers, but all in His own time," she murmured. "We must be patient, and one day, perhaps sooner than we imagine, we shall hear from Marion."

The sound of music, a harmonium softly played just outside the open door, startled her, and she sprang up from her chair in surprise.

"Strolling players! How very odd!" And she walked over to the door and looked out.

A curious and pretty picture met her eyes,

and she began to wish her husband and children were there to see it.

In a small hand-cart stood a harmonium, wreathed and decorated with green leaves and bright sun-flowers, and seated at its key-board, half hidden by the branching foliage, was a tall, slight woman dressed in gray, a shady hat upon her dark hair, her face and features entirely concealed from view by a black velvet mask.

Very softly her white hands moved over the notes, and then in a sweet full voice she sang:

"I know a green hill far away."

Mrs. Maybank listened in delighted surprise, and as the last words of the beautiful song died away, her eyes were full of tears.

"It is lovely. Who can she be?" she cried. "How I wish John and the children would come in to hear her."

As she spoke, she saw the fluttering of light frocks among the trees, and in a mo-

ment Clarice, Lucy, and Bunt and Bill came flying across the lawn, and seated themselves all hot and panting upon the doorsteps.

Upon their appearance, the masked lady raised her hands from the keys, then whispering a few words to a stout, elderly woman, who stood near, ran her fingers over the notes again, and dashed off into a merry, rattling dance.

From behind the cart now stepped forth a tiny figure in white muslin, and the children on the steps raised a cry of delight as the fairy-like creature drew up her skirts, pointed her toes, and holding a gaily beribboned tambourine high over her head, began to trip up and down, and swing herself lightly backwards and forwards in time to the music.

"Oh, what a darling!" they cried in a chorus. "She's an angel or a fairy. I never saw such a sprite."

"Seems as if she ought to be on the top

of a Christmas cake," remarked Bill, "or in a transformation scene at the pantomime. Do you think she'd break, girls, if we touched her?"

The girls laughed.

"How like a boy," said Clarice. "She's not made of either sugar or salt, my dear Bill."

"I dare say not. And I'm glad she's not likely to melt away. She does look a nice wee thing."

And certainly, the little girl made a charming picture, her fair cheeks just tinged with pink, her golden curls shining in the sun, her eyes bright with excitement as she flitted up and down, apparently absorbed in her dancing, yet watching her admiring audience upon the steps very closely.

"That's enough, darling," the lady at the harmonium said, softly.

Then the music stopped, and the little girl made a low curtsy, and approaching the children shyly, held out her tambourine.

"Money? My patience, I haven't a farthing," cried Bill, ransacking his pockets and growing very red. "I'm sorry, but—"

"You buy too many sweets, clove balls, and bulls-eyes," said Clarice, laughing, and she dropped sixpence into the tambourine. "I'm glad to see Bunt is not such a spendthrift."

"Bill's more generous than I am," Bunt said eagerly. She never could bear to hear any one find fault with her beloved brother. "He spent all his pocket-money in buying a present for mother on her birthday last week."

"Then I forgive him," said Clarice, grandly. "Lucy, it's your turn to put something into the tambourine."

"Kindly mind your own business, Clarice," Lucy answered, with a quick blush. "I don't see why you should dictate to us all."

"'Tis my nature to, my dear," Clarice replied, good humoredly. "I mean no harm."

"You'd better change your nature then,"

Lucy cried, throwing twopence into the tambourine, "or you'll get yourself disliked."

"Order, order," said Bill, in a deep voice. "Clarice is very useful. We want some one to keep us up to our P's and Q's. What's your name, little girl?"

"My name's Fay; a little strolling fairy."

The children on the steps laughed merrily.

"You sweet sprite." Bunt kissed her rounded cheek. "Why do you stroll and dance?"

Fay hung her head and dug her toes into the gravel.

"To get money," she said, under her breath, and glancing back at the lady at the harmonium, "for papa. He's ill, and mammy's very poor."

"Do you live near here?"

"No. We're just passing along. But I must go. I'm not," drawing herself reluctantly away, "allowed to talk to strangers—much. Only you're all so nice and only children. I like you. Are you all sisters?

And is he—" pointing to Bill, "your brother?"

"He is my brother," said Bunt, trying to draw the child to her side again. "And this is our country home. These two," glancing towards Clarice and Lucy, "are sisters, but are only our friends."

Fay sighed and looked from Bunt to the other little girls with longing eyes.

"Friends are nice," she said, sadly, "and I often long for some. I used to have plenty over the big sea in America. But I have none now. You see we are always traveling and moving about, and I haven't time to know any little girls as I used to."

"Well, you must come often to us and let us be your friends now."

"I couldn't. We'll be going on somewhere else to-morrow."

The lady at the harmonium beckoned to the child, saying impatiently, "Come, Fay, we must go. Come quickly."

But Fay lingered, and as Mrs. Maybank

came out upon the steps, she went forward and held up her tambourine.

Bunt and Bill sprang to meet their mother.

"Mammy, dear," Bunt cried, in a voice quivering with excitement, "doesn't the masked lady sing well?"

"Beautifully."

"I'm glad you think so. So please give this wee thing some money. Her father's ill. And her mother—the lady at the harmonium—is very poor."

"I came out to give her something, dear," Mrs. Maybank answered, smiling at the little girl's eagerness. "The child deserves it. She dances beautifully."

"Yes. Doesn't she? And she's so funny," cried Bill, catching his mother's hand and pressing it lovingly. "She's a strolling fairy, she says."

Mrs. Maybank laughed and stroked the fairy's golden hair, as she slipped half a crown into the tambourine.

"What is your name, dear?"

"Fay. I mayn't," quickly, "say any more. Mammy likes to keep it a secret who we are. But oh," her eyes shining with pleasure, "what a lot of money! Thank you, thank you—you're very good. But mammy's calling; I must go." Then suddenly she threw her arms around Mrs. Maybank's neck and kissed her. "You're a dear, kind lady. Father'll have a nice, nice tea." And she sprang down the steps and skipped gaily across the wide carriage drive to her mother's side. Chattering and laughing she hopped up into the little cart. Then the elderly woman caught hold of the handles again, and wheeled it away, the lady in the black mask walking slowly behind. At a turn of the drive Fay looked back, and waved her hand, then kissed it over and over again to the children on the steps.

"She's a perfect darling!" cried Bunt, rapturously. "I do wish she could stay at Nightingales with us always."

"Thank you," said Bill. "We've girls enough at Nightingales, now that the Miss Lonergans are hanging around."

"Hanging around! Such a rude expression, Bill. We'll go home at once," cried Clarice, starting to her feet.

"No, no." Bill caught her frock and pulled her down upon the steps again. "I apologize. I meant no rudeness. Only I do think if that kid had been a boy I'd have liked to keep him—her—"

"She wouldn't have been half so nice or graceful if she had been a boy, and not one bit of use to you as a companion. She's not much more than five," replied Clarice, "quite a baby."

"But as old as the hills, and a regular mystery," remarked Lucy, thoughtfully. "I wonder why her mother wears a mask?"

"To hide her face, of course," laughed Bill.

"I know that. But why should she wish to hide it?"

"Ask me another," Bill said, suddenly springing up.

"It's not a riddle," Bunt said, gravely. "And we were only wondering—"

"Well, don't waste your time in such a way. It's her own face and she may hide it if she likes."

"Of course, foolish boy. Who said she might not?"

"No one. But come along, let's go back to the wigwams," cried Bill. "I'm tired of civilization."

The other children laughed, and declared that they were quite happy where they were, and had enough of being savages for one day.

"And besides," said Lucy, "here comes the pony-carriage. Clarice and I must go home, so no more wigwams for us."

"What a nuisance!" cried Bill, as a pretty low phaeton, drawn by a small black pony, drove up to the door. "We hadn't half finished our game."

"We had, thank you. Come, Clarice, say good-by." And having shaken hands with Mrs. Maybank, and kissed Bunt and Bill, Lucy sprang into the carriage, and took up the reins. "It's my turn to drive," she said, "and Topsy seems very fresh. So don't keep her standing."

But Clarice lingered, saying last words upon the steps.

"If you don't come, I'll go without you," called Lucy.

At this threat, Clarice laughed, but she followed her sister at once into the carriage.

"Why didn't you let her go, Clary, and stay here with us?" Bill said, capering down the steps to the pony's head.

"She knows better," laughed Lucy. "Clarice does not care for walking. Stand back, Bill. We're off."

Bill jumped aside; the groom took his seat behind the young ladies, and Topsy started off at a brisk pace down the drive.

"It's a nice little turn-out, that, and

Lucy is rather a good whip," remarked Bill. "I wish we had one like it, Bunt."

"Wait till we are older. Then father will give us one, I know."

"I hate waiting. I like things at once."

"Very likely. But it's not good for us to have everything we want."

"How wise you are," Bill chuckled. "What shall we do now, Miss Wisdom?"

"Let us go to the farm-yard. There are six little new black pigs, and I want to see them."

"All right," Bill answered, somewhat dolefully. "Our chief is gone—the wigwams would be lonely. So let us examine the tiny pigs."

"Who loves me follows me," cried Bunt, and she darted away down a side-path, Bill scampering after her as fast as he could go.

CHAPTER III.

BUNT HAS AN INTERVIEW WITH FAY.

By an early train next morning, Dr. and Mrs. Maybank went up to London. Bill drove into Epsom to see them off.

Finding herself alone, Bunt went through the shrubbery at the back of the house, into a little stable that stood by itself among some big trees.

"Poor, dear old Grip," she cried, throwing her arms round the neck of a small white pony, with large, patient-looking blue eyes. "How lonely you are! It must be very sad to be blind like you and never get out of this gloomy stable."

The pony whinnied and rubbed his nose against the child's shoulder.

"You shall have a treat," Bunt cried, kissing his shaggy coat. "I'll lead you into

the park, and sit on the grass while you enjoy the fresh air and a nice feed. If it's good to be kind to people, it must be good to be kind to dear animals who can't speak or complain. So I'll lead you out, old man, and we'll have such a pleasant time."

As she talked, Bunt unfastened the rope with which Grip was tied up in his stall and led him out into the sunshine. The pony threw back his head and sniffed the air with evident enjoyment, and the little girl laughed and patted him softly as they passed along into the park together. Grip was a great favorite of hers. A year ago she had taken a ride upon his broad back every day. But when it was found that he was losing his sight, she was forbidden to do so any more, and he was turned out to grass. Then, as he grew quite blind, it was dangerous to let him into the park or paddock alone, and the poor pony was kept tied up in the stable. This pained Bunt's warm little heart, and so, whenever she could, she led him out to enjoy

a little air and a good feed of fresh, green grass.

It was a lovely day. The sky was blue and clear, and the sun extremely hot, so Bunt took shelter under a big haystack and sat down, while Grip put his nose to the ground, and began to browse in a peaceful, happy way that delighted his kind little mistress.

"Poor old boy," she murmured, letting him go to the full length of the rope, then gently drawing him back if he seemed about to go too far. "It must be sad to be blind like you and have to stay in your stable all day. Bill says you feel it much more when you have been out for a while, and are obliged to go back again. But I don't think so. He likes to have a treat himself sometimes, and so do I. I am sure you are just the same."

The little girl started suddenly as something moved at the other side of the haystack.

"What is that, I wonder," she said, looking up and listening. "It sounds like some one breathing heavily now. Could there be any one there? I think not. And yet—come, Grip, we'll see who and what it is." And she led the pony round the haystack.

But there was nothing to be seen, and Bunt was turning away, thinking she would walk Grip to the other side of the park to meet Bill as he came back from the station, when a sweet little voice called out:

"Little girl, little girl, I have lost myself. Do please help me to find my home."

Bunt uttered a cry of surprise and delight as out of a bundle of hay near the stack struggled a small figure in a blue cotton frock.

"Fay," she cried, recognizing at once the pretty child who had charmed them all with her dancing the day before. "What are you doing there?"

Fay rubbed her eyes.

"I was asleep," she said. "I lost my way,

and was so tired that I lay down in this nice field."

"Field?" Bunt laughed gaily. "It's our park."

"Yours? I thought you lived at that big house they call Nightingales."

"So I do. But all round, as far as you can see, belongs to papa, and this is his park."

"How nice! My papa is poor, and so ill he can not work to get any money."

"That is sad. Will he soon be well?"

Fay's eyes filled with tears.

"Mother hopes and hopes, but Biddy says no. He's not well enough fed, and he's too dull and lonely, she is sure."

"That's bad. But why is he lonely? Aren't you all with him?"

"Well, you see, it's this way. Mother must earn money. And to do it she must go out with her harmonium, and me and Biddy must come to wheel the cart, and then he's left by himself."

"That does seem bad. Bill and I will go and read to him some time," cried Bunt, "that is," blushing, "if we may. Where are you staying?"

"In Earl's Cottage."

"Oh, but isn't it very small and rather untidy there?"

"Yes. But mother says 'beggars can't be choosers.' If father is better to-morrow, we'll go on somewhere else. There's not much money 'round here. Except what you and your kind mother gave us we got hardly anything yesterday. And that," sighing, "is very tiring."

"Very."

"And then the church is so far that poor father can't go to Mass."

"Oh!" cried Bunt, delighted. "Are you Catholics?"

"Yes. Are you?"

"Of course. Every one of us. But it does seem very strange that a lady like your mother should go about the country wearing

a mask and playing a harmonium. Can't she get something better than that?"

"No. She has tried and tried, but could find nothing to do. In America she got plenty of money. People there were very kind and sorry for her and me."

"Why did she not stay over there?"

"I don't know. But I think she came to look for somebody she used to be friends with here. She never told me so, mind you. But I've heard her say things to Biddy and daddy that make me think so. And then she's always praying for some big intention."

"Oh, I wish," said Bunt, her little face puckered up in deep thought, "we could do something to help her."

"I wish you could. But you're too small. It's only big people, ladies and gentlemen, not little boys and girls like you and your brother, that can help us."

Bunt laughed gaily, and drew Grip back towards the hayrick.

"You're very wise. How old are you?"

"Nearly seven."

Bunt gave a gasp of astonishment, and looked wonderingly at the fairy-like creature.

"I am surprised. We all thought you were only five."

Fay smiled, a sad little smile, and sighed.

"I'm very small, I know. How old are you?"

"Oh, years older than you! I'm nine, and Bill, my brother, is eleven."

"And you live here always?"

Fay's eyes wandered admiringly over the beautiful park with its fine oaks, big, wide-spreading beeches, and shady elms. Then back at the comfortable, red-brick, Queen Anne mansion, at the pretty stables covered with ivy and Virginia creeper. "It's a lovely place."

"Yes. Bill and I like being here. But we go up to town in winter. We have a house in Harley Street. Our father is a great doctor there."

"Does he cure people?" asked Fay, eagerly. "People who are very, very ill?"

"Of course. Everybody says there's no one like him. Nurse declares he brings sick people back from the grave."

"I wish—" Fay clasped her hands together, and the bright color rushed over her pretty face, "he could cure my daddy."

"He could and he would if he were here," said Bunt, with conviction. "But he has gone away. A lady sent for him to go to her daughter, who is ill, and he'll be at their house for two or three days, perhaps."

"What a pity. But then mother says we can't afford good doctors. They cost heaps of money."

Bunt made no reply. She looked up at the sky, her eyes following a lark that was soaring above their heads into the vast expanse of cloudless blue, singing joyfully as he went higher and higher, till he almost disappeared from view.

"Father likes to do good," she said at last,

her eyes coming down to earth again, and resting in kind sympathy on the little girl's sad face. "And when he comes home he will go and see your father, I am sure, and —and ask no money."

Fay grew radiant. "Really? Do you think so? That will be delightful. If daddy were only strong, things would be quite different. He's an artist, and can paint lovely pictures."

"And does he get money for them?"

"Sometimes. But he can't paint them now. He's too weak."

"Well, father will make him strong. So don't you fret."

"But supposing we have to go before he comes home? Your father, I mean."

"But you must not."

"If mother wants money, and I know she very soon will, we must go if father is able to move."

"I wish we could think of some way of getting money for her."

Fay flushed.

"She likes to earn for herself—and would not like to take any money unless she worked for it," she said, quickly. "Mother's very proud."

"I am glad she is. I like people who are proud—not stuck-up, you know, or proud of their looks or dress, but spirited, and liking to work for themselves. Father says they are always the best."

"Mother was like that all her life. Before she married daddy, she taught children French, music, and reading. She was a governess in New York."

"That was easier than tramping about with a harmonium. Why didn't she go back to be a governess?"

"Because of daddy and me. She couldn't leave us always, and so she made up her mind to put on a mask and play and sing through the country. It was Biddy's idea."

"A very funny one. Well, I will talk to Bill and to mother when she comes home

to-morrow, and we'll see what we can do to help your mother."

"That will be good of you. But you are a very kind little girl, I think."

Bunt laughed gaily.

"I'm glad you think so. Come, Grip, you must go home, old boy. You see," turning to Fay, "he's blind, and so I have to lead him about. Will you come and look at his stable?"

"I'm afraid I can't. I see Biddy running across the park to look for me. Good-by. I hope I'll see you soon again."

"Indeed, you shall. And Fay, don't say anything to any one about father going to see your daddy. We'll keep it a secret. Because, you see, if he didn't come home in time it would be such a disappointment."

"I won't say a word, not even to mammy," cried the little girl. "But I do hope he'll come in time."

"So do I, most sincerely," answered Bunt. Then as Fay ran across the grass to meet the

faithful old Irishwoman, her mother's devoted servant, friend and confidante, she turned away with Grip, and led him back to his stable.

CHAPTER IV.

"AN ORIGINAL AFFAIR."

THAT afternoon Bunt sat upon the sofa in the big oak-panelled hall, her long slim legs stretched out upon a stool before her. In her arms she held a pretty kitten, and as she petted and caressed it, the great St. Bernard dog at her knee looked up at her with imploring eyes, and uttered a low growl of discontent.

"Jealous, Abbess? For shame!" said Bunt. "This poor little kitty has had a bad fall—tumbled right down through the banisters when he was trying to catch his tail. He's only a baby, my pretty Jingo, and must be petted now and then. So don't be jealous, sweet Abbess, for I love you best of all."

The beautiful creature seemed to understand every word the child said. A softer

light came into her eyes, and she lifted one large heavy paw, and laid it very gently on the little girl's frock.

"You dear thing." Bunt kissed her rapturously. "I know you'll be kind to Jingo and play with him, and," holding the kitten close to the dog's big nose, "be a mother to him. Now, lick him and make friends."

Very obediently, Abbess put out her tongue and softly licked the kitten's back.

"Well done, old lady. If little boys and girls were as obedient as you are, how pleased their fathers and mothers would be." She put the kitten on the floor and laughed gaily, as, nothing daunted by the big dog's formidable appearance the little thing began to play fearlessly with her tail.

"What's the fun?" asked Bill, running in, all hot and breathless. "I see—Jingo and Abbess at play. I'd like to take a snap-shot of them like that."

"As well try to take a snap-shot of the wind," cried Bunt, as the kitten darted

across the floor and scampered off through the open door and away over the lawn.

"About the same. He's gone to look for birds now."

"He's too small to catch any, I hope. That's one thing I don't like cats for. They are very cruel to those sweet birds."

"It seems so to us. But it's their natural instinct makes them hunt the birds, papa says. They don't mean any harm."

"Perhaps not. But they kill the dear things all the same."

"Well, we can't prevent them, so don't look so solemn, old lady. Come along to the wigwams. The Lonergans will be here directly."

"I don't want to go there yet. I want to talk to you about something, Bill. So sit down here." And she pointed to a seat beside her on the sofa.

"Why, you're as grave as a mustard pot. What's the matter?" asked Bill, sitting down cross-legs on the rug. "Sofas were made for

grown-ups, not for boys and girls. I like the floor best. But why are you so serious?"

"I saw little Fay again this morning."

"Dancing like a fairy?"

"No, sleeping—or rather, waking up from sleep near the haystack in the park."

Bill opened his blue eyes very wide.

"What cheek! A strolling player-dancer in our park. Well, to be sure. Did you turn her out body and bones?"

"Bill," indignantly, "indeed, I didn't. I was only too glad to see her."

"Of course you were. You like to be surrounded with strange things. Blind ponies, big dogs, cats, kittens, dancing children—"

"Bill, Bill." Bunt laughed and squatted herself on the rug beside him. "Do be serious for a moment. I want to talk to you, and ask your advice."

"I am flattered. But I dare say if I gave it you'd do something exactly the opposite of what I advised."

"If I thought you were wrong, yes. But still, I want to hear what you think."

"All right. Take me while I'm in the humor, for it won't last long. I may be off in a second."

Bunt laid her hand upon his shoulder.

"No, you won't, when I tell you it's about Fay. Her father is very ill."

"Oh, has she a father, too? What is he?"

"An artist. But too ill to do any work."

"Poor fellow. That's a pity. You might have given him an order to paint Grip and Abbess, and though last not least, Jingo."

Bunt turned away with a sigh.

"You always make a joke of everything, Bill, and this is very serious. When does papa come back?"

"In four days. Quite the end of the week. But," putting his arms round her, "sit down, Bunt, and tell me what you're bothering about. I promise you I'll be as solemn as a judge, and give the matter my most serious

attention. Now," clearing his throat noisily, "begin, please. I'm ready." And leaning his head against a table near, he folded his arms upon his breast.

"I wish papa were coming home sooner," said Bunt, sadly.

"Well, there's no use wishing, and I'd advise you not to waste your time doing so. What do you want him for?"

"To visit Fay's father, and see if he can do anything to make him strong."

"What's wrong with him?"

"He's weak, and can do nothing. Fay says her mother can not get him good food; she earns so little money."

"That's bad. But, look here. Why shouldn't we take them a basket of good things?"

Bunt clasped her hands in delight.

"Oh, Bill, if we could! But mother's away. That's one thing I was going to ask your advice about. Do you think we might, if cook—"

"Of course we may. Mother always tells us to be kind to poor people, and cook will do what we tell her. Let us go and see what she has got."

"How shall we take it?"

"In the donkey-carriage. Or better still, when the Lonergans arrive we'll get into their pony-trap and make them drive us. Where do Fay and her people live?"

"At Earl's Cottage."

"Oh! Quite near. That's nice. Let us drive there and bring the kiddy back. She's good fun."

"Yes. We'll bring her to tea, and make her play with us in the wigwams. But there's another thing, Bill. The poor mother wants to earn money. Can you think of any way she can do that?"

"Not I. It's easy to give a little soup, or money, or meat. But to help people to earn money is another thing. Ask Clarice; she knows more about women than I do."

"You don't say so?" Bunt laughed,

merrily. "I thought nobody knew anything half so well as you, Billy asthore."

"Come, now, no chaff. I'm not quite so conceited as to think that. But let us go at once, and storm the larder."

"Be polite, Bill, please. Cook's very huffy, remember."

"Oh, she'll do anything for me. I have only to look pleasant, smile, and, heigh, presto! it's done."

"You've a wonderful way with you, 'tis true," the little girl said, gaily. "But take care and speak nicely. Come, Abbess, it's time you had your dinner." And followed by the big dog she ran down the back stairs after Bill.

The basement at Nightingales was large and roomy. The kitchen was beautifully bright with its freshly-tiled walls, shining coppers, and snowy-white floor. The cook, a short, stout woman with a somewhat rosy complexion, looked up in surprise as the children appeared at the door.

"Well, to be sure, Master Bill and Miss Bunt, what may you be wanting?" she asked, taking her hands out of a basin of flour.

"You tell her, Bunt," Bill said, pushing his sister forward. "I'm no good at explanations." For in spite of his boast that cook would do anything for him, he began to feel horribly shy, and to wish that he had not come down to the kitchen.

"Mrs. Jones, please," Bunt said, in a sweet, imploring voice, "Bill and I want you to help us to be kind to a poor sick gentleman, and send him a basketful of nice things. Mamma would allow us to give him anything you would think right."

"To be sure she would, miss," cook answered, well pleased at the polite way in which Bunt acknowledged her power in kitchen and larder. "What do you think he would like?"

Bunt mentioned several things.

"And am I to send them, miss."

"No, no; we'll take them ourselves, thank

you. Could you have them ready in about an hour?"

"Certainly, miss."

"Thank you so much. Bill, come along now, and leave cook in peace."

But Bill had strolled into the larder, where he was regaling himself with some beautiful grapes.

"Those are just the ones I was going to send the poor gentleman," said cook. "But, of course, if you eat them—"

Bill dropped the grapes at once. "I am sorry. Please send them, cook. They are delicious." And giving a loud, shrill whistle he darted out of the kitchen, and away up a flight of steps into the yard.

"Bill, please, don't go so fast," cried Bunt. "I want to ask you—shall we send a bottle of wine?"

But Bill was gone, and the little girl decided for herself, and told Mrs. Jones to put a bottle of port in with the other things, and then followed her brother into the yard.

Here she found Abbess eating her dinner, and she sat down on some steps to watch her.

"She does enjoy it," she said, smiling. "Dear old girl, it's a pleasure to see you eat."

"So the chickens think," laughed Bill, who was standing near the big dog, his hands in his pockets. "See how they are running in this direction. Keep back, my dears, or the lady Abbess may turn upon you."

"She wouldn't," cried Bunt. "She's as gentle as a lamb."

"Very likely. In fact, I know she is. But lambs—no, it's worms that will turn. Now, just look at that one—the one we christened the unfortunate Peck. I declare she's right into the plate on top of the dinner."

"It's a shame. She's actually eating it. Send her away, Bill."

"Not I. Abbess can fight her own battles. I am dying to see what she will do."

Encouraged by the dog's apparent indifference to her presence in the dish, the chicken,

a small, weakly creature, made herself quite at home there, and pecked peacefully at all the best pieces. For some time Abbess did not seem to notice the intruder, and went on quietly eating her dinner. But suddenly the unfortunate Peck presumed too far, and boldly caught hold of a morsel of potato just under the dog's nose. This was too much. Without raising her head, Abbess made a snap; her teeth met together round the chicken's neck, and the headless body fell upon the side of the dish.

"Oh, poor Peck!" cried Bill. "You're done for now. Get away, all of you," clapping his hands vigorously, "or you may meet with the same fate. Discretion, I assure you, is the better part of valor. Away you go." And he chased the chickens and hens here and there, all over the yard.

"What a row!" said Clarice Lonergan, appearing suddenly at the gate. "Are you trying to catch a hen or two, Bill?"

"No; only hunting them away. Abbess

has just bitten the head off the unfortunate Peck."

"Really? That gentle old lady. I did not think she could be so cruel."

"She wasn't cruel," cried Bunt, up in arms at once in defense of her beautiful pet. "It was Peck's fault. Abbess did not know what she was doing."

"Quite true," said Bill. "The little wretch deserved her fate. She almost put herself into the big dog's mouth."

"Who loves danger shall perish therein," laughed Clarice. "Well, poor Peck's not much loss. She would never have grown fat or made a useful hen. And now, my friends, I have a piece of news for you."

"Nice news?"

"Very, I think. Lucy and I are enchanted. Mother's going to give a children's party."

"Oh!" Bill's face fell. "Is that all?"

"All, Bill?" cried Bunt. "Why, it's lovely."

"I don't care for parties. I'd far rather play in our wigwams, or go for a ride. Parties are dull."

"That's because you didn't learn how to dance," said Lucy, poking her head in over her sister's shoulder. "But you'll like this party. It's to be a very original affair."

Bill opened the gate and he and Bunt went out of the farm-yard, and strolled round to the front of the house with their visitors.

"What kind of a party is an 'original affair,' Clarice?" asked Bunt.

Clarice laughed and put her arm round her little friend.

"A party just a tiny bit out of the common, and that, I think, ours will be. Mamma has made up her mind to have fifty-two children, the number of cards in a pack, you know, all dressed like cards. One is to be the Queen of Hearts—you, I should think, Bunt. Another the Queen of Clubs. Another the Knave of Diamonds, and so on.

I think it will be very pretty. We'll all walk at the beginning, in procession, and then dance quadrilles and lancers."

"I'll be the Knave of Hearts," cried Bill, tumbling head over heels upon the grass. "I'll steal the tarts and run away, and then I shan't have to dance."

"Now, don't be a silly Billy," said Lucy, sharply. "We can't have any nonsense like that. We want all the boys and girls we know to play their parts well. As it is, we're short of one, and don't know what to do."

Bill walked up to Clarice and stood quite still before her.

"I can find you a delicious Queen of Hearts or Diamonds. And if you'll have her, I'll practice hard, and dance till I can't stand at your party."

The girls laughed merrily.

"What a splendid promise. Who is your charming friend?"

"The little girl Fay."

"The sprite who danced here yesterday?" said Clarice. "But she's a baby."

"She's nearly seven—and dances like a fairy. Have her, Clarice. She'll look lovely as a queen."

Clarice looked doubtful, but made no reply.

"We don't know her," remarked Lucy. "Neither does mamma."

"Oh, that doesn't matter. Bunt knows her, and I tell you what, we're going to take some things to her father, who's ill," said Bill. "Do have her. She'd be the nicest thing at your party. Wouldn't she, Bunt?"

"Yes," thoughtfully. "I really think she would. But then she may be gone. As soon as her father is well enough, she and her mother are going away to play and dance and make money in new places."

"The mother plays well," said Clarice. "And seems quite a lady."

"She is a lady," cried Bunt, her cheeks

growing red, her eyes shining with excitement. "And, oh, Clarice, I have such a good idea."

"Hurrah!" shouted Bill. "How splendid. Bunt with an idea—what fun!" And he turned a Catherine wheel upon the grass.

"What is it, dear?" said Lucy. "Don't mind that silly boy. Bill, I'm ashamed of you."

"Most gracious Chino Chink," bowing and pulling the lock of curly hair that lay upon his forehead, "forgive me."

"I'm not Chino Chink at present, and our conversation is quite serious. What is your idea, Bunt?"

The little girl looked at Clarice shyly, and then at Lucy.

"Perhaps," she said, blushing, "I ought not to ask you. But I am longing to help this poor lady, Fay's mother, to earn some money. Mrs. Lonergan will want some one to play at the party, and she will pay well. So—"

Clarice clapped her hands and pirouetted lightly up and down.

"Capital! You dear, good, thoughtful mite. Why, it's the very thing. That lady played lovely waltzes, and mamma was just wondering who she could get to play for us. But I suppose she will come without a mask?"

The children laughed.

"Of course. A masked lady at the piano would be too funny," said Lucy. "We could not allow it."

"It's to be an original affair," cried Bill. "So what matter? A masked lady at the piano would just be a little bit out of the common. Eh?"

"You impertinent boy, how dare you make fun of our party?" cried Lucy, making a dive across as though to box his ears. "I'll punish you well."

"If you can catch me—yes," cried Bill, darting across the lawn. "But girls can't run."

"Can't they? You'll see!" And Lucy fled away after him.

"Now that those two noisy youngsters have departed, let us talk the matter out quietly together," said Clarice, and she drew Bunt down upon a seat under a big shady tree. "You are very anxious to help this lady, dear?"

"Oh, very. I had a long talk with little Fay this morning in the park, and I feel so sorry for her and her mother. Her father is ill, and I am going to coax papa to go and see him, and make him well, when he comes home."

Clarice smiled and patted Bunt's cheek. The child's faith in her father's power to cure all ailments always amused her, but she liked her the better for it.

"Will Dr. Maybank be away long?"

"Till the end of the week, Bill says."

"And you want to help her to earn money? Might we not send her some?"

"No. Fay says she likes to earn it. So

do have her to play at your party, Clarice, won't you?"

"Mother must decide that. I'll tell her about her. But you see she has never heard her, and she will not be likely to trust to her to play at her party, unless some grown person could tell her she played really well."

"Mamma heard her." Bunt clapped her hands. "Mamma will do that. How much will you pay her, Clary?"

Clarice laughed and pinched the child's cheek.

"You go too fast, little one. I hardly know what mamma would pay. A couple of guineas, perhaps."

"How lovely! Ah, there is Fred. Well, Fred," to a spruce young footman who came out of the house at that moment, "what is it? Do you want me?"

"Yes, miss. Cook says the hamper is ready."

"How nice," jumping up. "But, Clar-

ice, will you be an angel and drive me and my basket down to Earl's Cottage? Cook has put up some things for the sick man, Fay's father, and I want to take them to him at once."

"You good, kind little soul; of course I will. And," kissing her, "you may be quite sure that if I can, I'll get mamma to engage the masked lady to play at our dance."

Bunt turned, and threw her arms round her neck.

"You are so good. Thank you so much."

"What a sweet picture," laughed Bill, running back to the two girls, Lucy still in pursuit.

"Pak-pak," he cried, holding up his hand. "Let us keep still now, Lucy, and hear what these two wise heads have decided."

"We're going off in the pony-trap with the hamper," said Bunt. "Will you come?"

"No. You and Clarice will be enough to go," said Bill. "Lucy and I will stay be-

hind and tidy up the wigwams. We'll have afternoon tea in Mowgli's. So mind you bring Fay back to take part in our festivities."

"If we can," cried Bunt, gaily, and she ran into the house to get her hat.

A moment later the pretty little phaeton drove round to the door again, a good sized hamper tied on behind.

"This is lovely," Bunt cried, as she seated herself beside Clarice. "*Au revoir*, you two," waving her hand. "We'll be back very soon."

"And don't attempt to show yourselves without Fay," cried Bill.

"Well, I declare," laughed Clarice. "That's going a little too far. However, we'll do our best to bring her back with us." And touching the pony lightly with the whip, she drove away.

CHAPTER V.

A THUNDERSTORM AND WHAT IT BROUGHT

In a poor but clean little cottage by the roadside, a pale, sad-faced man lay upon a couch, looking wistfully at a half-finished picture that stood on an easel by his side.

"If I could finish it," he murmured. "Biddy might take it to London and sell it for me, if only for a few shillings. They would be so useful."

The door opened softly, and Fay stole in on tiptoe.

"Little one," he said, "where is your mother?"

Fay laid her cheek against his.

"Out, daddy, dear. She went into Epsom to get some meat to make beef-tea."

"Poor soul. It's a long walk there and back."

"Very. And," sighing, "very hot. I wish I were big enough to go and get things for mammy. But I'm not, and so I have to stay at home."

"And look after your worthless old daddy?"

The child kissed him lovingly.

"Don't say that, daddy. It hurts. You're a dear, clever daddy, if you were only strong. And it's not your fault that you're weak and ill. God made you so."

"And we must submit to God's will. I know, my pet, and I try not to complain. But I'd give worlds, if I had them, to be well again."

Fay's face grew suddenly bright and she smiled radiantly.

"And so you shall be, daddy, dear. I heard to-day of a great doctor who cures every one; brings people back from the grave, they say. And he will—I feel he will cure you."

Her father smiled sadly, and stroked her

golden curls with his white transparent hand.

"Who is he, little Fay, and how did you hear of him?"

Fay looked at her father, her blue eyes full of confidence.

"I don't know his name. But his daughter, a dear little girl called Bunt, said that he was a great man, and brought people back from the grave."

The sick man lay back laughing upon his pillow.

"You funny child. Where did you see Miss Bunt?"

"She's the little girl at Nightingales, the big house where they gave mother and me so much money, when we danced and played there the other day. I met her in her park this morning, and told her you were ill."

"And she said her father was a great doctor? Well, perhaps he is, little Fay. But big doctors want big fees, and you know how very poor your mammy and I are."

"Yes, but," began Fay, then stopped short, blushing suddenly rosy red, as she remembered her promise to keep the idea of Dr. Maybank visiting her father for nothing a secret.

"Well? But what?"

"Don't ask me please, papa," clasping and unclasping her hands nervously. "It's a secret what Bunt said, and—"

"Oh! very well. I won't ask you to tell it to me. I like to find people able to keep a secret."

"I'd love to tell you." Fay twisted the corner of her pinafore into a knot. "Perhaps, if I just whispered it—"

"No, no. If you promised, keep your word. Never forget that, Fay. If you make a promise, big or little, you must keep it."

"Yes, papa. And, perhaps, oh, perhaps Bunt's father's very clever. Do you think it's likely?"

"I think it's quite likely. But not knowing him, I can't say for certain."

"You'll know him some day, I am sure of that."

"I don't think so. But, Fay, I'm going to do a little painting."

"Oh, papa, it will tire you too much."

"Not if you prop me up and get me everything I want."

"I'll do that," cried Fay. And she flew about the room collecting paints, brushes, and palette.

"Change your frock, my pretty dancer, and I'll try to finish my picture."

"Yes, papa." And she ran into the next room.

In a few moments she came back in a soft lace frock, a wreath of poppies on her head, a few bright blossoms in her hand.

Her father raised himself, and having propped him up with pillows, she threw herself into a graceful attitude at the foot of the couch.

"A little more to that side," he said, breathing with difficulty. "Your head up

—your toe out. That will do." He looked at her critically, and took up his palette and brushes.

But the exertion was too much for him, and he grew suddenly white as marble. The palette fell from his fingers and he fainted.

Terrified, Fay flung down her flowers and rushed to the door, calling loudly for Biddy.

The faithful servant came running up, and telling the child not to be frightened, bathed her master's face and hands with eau de Cologne and water.

He opened his eyes, sighed heavily, and then smiled.

"It—it is nothing, Biddy. I—I attempted too much. I'll sleep now." And he turned his head away from the light. "Send Fay out into the fields."

"Yes, sir," the woman answered, and she glanced across at the little girl, who stood watching her father with anxious eyes. "Run out, dear," she whispered. "I'll stay with him now."

"Is he better? Really better?"

"Yes, yes. See, he has gone to sleep already," said Biddy, reassuringly. "Change your frock and go out."

"I'll go down the road to meet mother."

"Very well. But don't walk too far. It is very warm."

Fay nodded her head.

"Very. Poor mammy, how tired she will be." And she slipped quietly away.

As the child left the cottage some ten minutes later, the sky which had been so brilliantly bright, grew suddenly black. Ominous looking clouds hung very low over the Downs, and had Fay been a little older and a little wiser, she would have seen that the day was changing, and that before very long there would be a thunderstorm. But being neither weather-wise nor observant, Fay failed to see any warning in the sky, and set off at a brisk pace down the hilly road.

"I'd give anything to know that that

great man, Bunt's father, was home, and that he was coming to visit poor daddy," she thought as she ran along. "He's iller than he used to be, and it makes him so sad and sorry."

A low rumbling noise in the distance startled the child, and she looked round her in alarm. Then came a vivid flash of lightning, and the rain began to fall suddenly in immense drops, which soon settled into a thick, steady downpour. In an instant Fay's thin cotton frock was soaked through, and her feet and legs and hair streamed with water.

"Oh, dear, how miserable! What shall I do?" she cried, trembling with terror. "Holy Mother, take care of me," clasping her hands. "My dear angel guardian, keep close to me. I can't go on now. And it's a long way back in such rain. Yet where can I shelter? Ah, it looks nice and dry in there. So I'll creep in and wait till the storm passes." And she slipped down a

grassy bank and seated herself in a little hollow place in a green hedge over which spread the wide branches of a patriarchal beech tree.

"The rain must stop soon," she thought, peeping out at the sky. "I see a piece of blue."

But the blue disappeared. The thunder grew louder and louder, and the rain came splashing down harder and faster than ever. Presently, the sound of horses' feet and carriage wheels were heard on the road, and forgetting the wet and the mud in her anxiety to see who was coming, Fay ventured out of her hiding-place and scrambled up the bank.

She looked a forlorn and miserable little figure, as she stood in her wet clinging frock, and dripping hat and hair.

"Bunt!" she cried, as the pony-trap drove along, and she saw Clarice and her kind little friend Bunt, seated in it together under a huge umbrella, a big rug covering their feet

and legs. "Oh, please stop and speak to me. I'm so miserable."

The children uttered loud exclamations of pity and dismay and drew up quickly.

"Is that you, Fay?" they cried, in a breath. "Poor child—you are drowned. We came expressly to look for you. So, jump in."

"Please, I'm very wet, and dirty. I don't think I ought to."

"Nonsense," said Clarice. "Bob," to the groom, "roll that shawl round the child, very tightly, and put her in here on the front seat."

As the groom sprang down from his perch behind his young mistress Fay drew back.

"I can walk home, thanks. I think I'd better—really."

"No, no. Come with us," cried Bunt. "Maplewood is quite close."

"But my father will be anxious—besides, I am dripping."

"You must come with us, Fay," Clarice

said, firmly. "Biddy told us you might. Your father is fast asleep and the cottage must be kept quiet. We went there to leave a hamper (Bunt's present), and Biddy was wringing her hands over you. She said if we found you near Maplewood we were to take you there. So come along. It's my home, you know."

"But my frock—my shoes. See, the rain is streaming from them, and my feet are so muddy."

"Never mind. We have plenty of frocks and shoes at our house. Lots of things that Lucy used to wear when she was small. So come along. Your mother or Biddy will come for you when the storm is over."

After this Fay resisted no longer, and allowed Bob to roll her up in the shawl and place her on the front seat of the pony-trap.

"That is splendid," cried Clarice. "You won't get cold or wet us like that. We'll soon get home." And she sent the pony on at a rattling pace down the road.

"Steady, Clarice," laughed Bunt. "Topsy's going like the wind. We are bumping over the stones so much that I can hardly hold the umbrella over you."

"I want to get this child into dry things as soon as possible. So never mind about the umbrella."

"I do hope Fay's mother will come for her," Bunt said, as the pony-trap turned in at the Maplewood gates. "It will be a splendid way to get your mother to engage her for the party."

"First-rate. Thanks to the thunderstorm everything has been arranged for us. When mother hears her play, she will, I am sure, be delighted, and engage her at once."

"That will be lovely. If father would come home now I would be quite content."

As the children entered the hall at Maplewood, Mrs. Lonergan came hurrying out of the drawing-room to meet them.

"My dear," she began, then paused abruptly, looking at Bunt and Fay in aston-

ishment. "Good morning," kissing Bunt. "But where is Lucy? And who in the world, Clarice, is this little wet morsel of humanity?"

"Lucy stayed with Bill," Clarice said. "And this is a little girl we," laughing, "picked up by the roadside." And then with some difficulty and at great length she explained who and what Fay was and their reasons for bringing her home.

"An interesting story, dear," Mrs. Lonergan said. "But now take the child upstairs and see what nurse can find for her to wear. She must have something dry to put on at once. When she is dressed come down to the drawing-room, and we'll talk the matter over. I am glad you are in out of that rain. I was beginning to be very uneasy. I suppose Lucy will stay at Nightingales till it is all over."

"Oh, yes. I'll drive back for her and take Bunt home after tea. Lucy is always happy with Bill. But come, Fay, you must

get off your wet frock." And she hurried the child upstairs to the room that had once been the nursery.

Here sat the old nurse whom Lucy and Clarice loved very dearly, working industriously. As the little girls entered she threw up her hands with a cry of horror.

"Miss Clarice, how could you bring such a dripping little creature over your mamma's good carpets?"

"Oh, never mind the carpets, nurse. They have not suffered. But this darling may, if you don't find her some dry clothes, right away."

"So she may, so she may," said nurse, standing up quickly. "But we'll soon find her something." And she began to ransack the drawers and wardrobes.

Clarice and Bunt hovered round Fay. They dried and brushed her hair, took off her wet shoes and stockings, and tried on every garment she required with the greatest care, rejecting as unsuitable everything that did

not fit exactly, or did not strike them as pretty enough.

"It's like dressing a doll," laughed Bunt. "You are a fairy for your age, Fay."

"Her name suits her perfectly," Clarice cried gaily, turning the child round to make her look at herself in a long glass. "Lucy wore that frock when she was five. Aren't you ashamed of yourself?"

Fay threw back her golden head and stood up on her toes.

"Not one bit, Miss Lonergan. 'Good goods are made up in small parcels,' daddy says, and if I were big, people wouldn't think so much of my dancing. So you see I don't mind."

Clarice laughed merrily, and nurse looked at the child with wondering eyes.

"If you're small," she said, nodding her head, "you make up for it in sense. If you and Miss Lucy were like her, Miss Clarice, we'd have a quiet house."

"Now, you wouldn't like it, nurse, you

know you wouldn't," cried Clarice. "But who's coming upstairs like that? Lucy's away, and—"

The door opened noisily, and Lucy and Bill bounded into the room.

"What are you doing?" they cried together.

"Changing Fay's things," said Bunt. "Doesn't she look nice, Lucy?"

"Sweet. But you have been an age. Mother says you have been up here nearly three hours."

"Oh, surely not," Clarice laughed. "And how did you get here?"

"Mrs. Maybank came back from town and sent us on in the carriage. It is to wait and take Bunt and Bill home when they are ready."

"I was so glad to come," said Bill. "The wigwams were dripping, and there was nothing to do at Nightingales."

"Is the storm over, then?" asked Bunt.

"Hours ago," answered Lucy. "But

come down. Mrs. Lyons, Fay's mother, is here. She is playing to mother, and wants Fay to dance for her."

Bunt clapped her hands, and Clarice said joyfully, "What good news! It's all right now, I'm sure, Bunt. Let us run down and see."

"Come, Fay," Lucy cried. "You must put your best foot foremost, remember."

"What does that mean?" asked the child, her blue eyes opening very wide.

"Dance your best. Like this," said Bill, shuffling his feet about, and turning round cracking his fingers and shouting. "That's the sort of thing, you know."

"Most graceful," cried Bunt, laughing. "Fay knows better than that, my boy."

Fay imitated Bill, and began to sing in a sweet, clear voice:

"He can dance like a fairy
And sing like a bird,
He can, 'pon my word."

"You mock me," cried Bill, in gruff tones.

"You small atom of humanity, how dare you? I'll make you pay for this." And he sprang toward her. Fay dodged him and ran round the table. A chase ensued, in which the others joined, and soon the nursery rang with their merry shouts and laughter.

"And now, my children," cried Lucy, springing up on a chair, "peace. We must go downstairs. This battle must be considered at an end for the present. The next time we meet it can be renewed and decided. Come." And jumping to the ground she caught Fay's hand and led her away.

In the drawing-room they found Mrs. Lyons at the piano, and Mrs. Lonergan listening to her playing with evident delight.

Fay sprang to her mother's side, and taking her fingers off the keys, Mrs. Lyons bent and kissed her.

The other children stood by in silence, looking at Fay's mother with considerable curiosity. She was a fair, gentle woman, with

rather a sad expression and a very sweet smile. She was a complete stranger to them all, yet there was something familiar about her that puzzled them.

"She's like some one I know," whispered Bunt to Clarice.

"Yes. She certainly has a look I seem to know."

"I'll tell you who she reminds me of," said Bill. "You'll laugh, I am sure. But she is like father."

"What an idea! You are silly, Bill."

"Hush!" murmured Lucy.

Mrs. Lyons rose from the music-stool and came forward with outstretched hand to greet the children.

"You have been exceedingly kind to my little Fay," she said. "And I am very grateful. She is most fortunate to have found such good friends."

"We like her so much," said Clarice. "You will let her come here often, Mrs. Lyons, I hope?"

"If we stay in the neighborhood, certainly. But we are like gipsies, and are never long in one place."

"But if you got employment here," said Mrs. Lonergan, coming forward, "you would stay, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes." Her color rose a little. "But who will give me that?"

"I would be glad if you would give my daughters music lessons, and I am sure Mrs. Maybank would like Bunt and Bill to have some, too."

Mrs. Lyons flushed, then turned pale.

"Maybank?" she said in a trembling voice. "Did you say Maybank?"

"Yes. This is Miss Bunt and Master Bill Maybank. It was at their house my children first saw you and little Fay."

"At the beautiful place they called Nightingales?"

"Yes. That is Dr. Maybank's country house."

"Oh, it could not be, of course," Mrs.

Lyons told herself. "I am dreaming. It is an uncommon name, but in England there must be many Maybanks. The poor fellow could never have risen to live in a place like that." To Mrs. Lonergan she said:

"I will give your children lessons with pleasure, and if you can persuade Mrs. Maybank to allow me to teach these dear little ones, I would be most grateful."

"She will be easily persuaded, I am sure. Don't you think so, Bunt?"

"Oh, yes, I am sure she will."

"You dear little girl." Mrs. Lyons had tears in her eyes and voice. "It will be a joy to teach you. And now I must thank you for the beautiful hamper of good things which I found at the cottage just now, labelled 'with Bunt's love.' You have a warm heart, child. God bless you."

Bunt stroked the lady's hand in silence, and she looked so shy and tearful that Mrs. Lonergan thought it wise to change the conversation.

"And now, Mrs. Lyons," she said, "I want you to do me a great favor."

Bunt smiled radiantly, and the other children nudged one another, exchanging quick looks of pleasure, and gathered closely round their mother and her visitor.

"I will do anything you wish, if I can."

"Thank you. I think you will easily do what I am going to suggest." Mrs. Lonergan smiled. "You will not find it difficult, I am sure. It is simply to teach these children and some of their friends to dance lancers and quadrilles."

"That I can easily do and it will be a pleasant task."

"My idea is to give a party for children. Something a little out of the common."

Bill looked at Lucy and giggled.

"Hush!" whispered Bunt. "I'm ashamed of you, sir."

"I'm glad you seem pleased, Bill," said Mrs. Lonergan, "and you must do your best to dance well."

The little girls laughed and Bill grew very red.

"I'll do my best, Mrs. Lonergan," he said. "But I don't know how to dance."

"You must learn. You see, Mrs. Lyons, I want to have it a kind of fancy-dress ball for a small number, and thought of dressing the young people as a pack of cards."

"A pretty idea."

"I think it is. There are just fifty-one children round the neighborhood who would come."

"And you want fifty-two?"

"Yes. But, perhaps, one short would not matter."

"Have Fay," said Bill. "Make her Queen of Hearts, and I'll be the King."

Mrs. Lonergan laughed heartily.

"May we have her, Mrs. Lyons? I'll have her dress made with the children's. So please let her be the Queen of Hearts."

"Oh, do, mammy, please, please," begged Fay, her eyes dancing with delight. "It

would be lovely, and some day when daddy's well enough he'll paint me and Bill together."

This idea tickled the children, and they burst into a peal of merry laughter.

"Fancy Bill in a picture," cried Clarice, pulling his ear softly. "On his knees before the Queen, I suppose."

"And a charming picture, too," cried Mrs. Lonergan. "Don't tease him, Clary, it's not fair. Is," turning to Mrs. Lyons, "your husband an artist, then?"

"Yes. But unfortunately he is too ill to do his work. We were on the verge of starvation, Mrs. Lonergan, when I hit upon the plan of going out to sing in the streets. I put on a mask that people should not know me, and also because I felt less shy of observation when my face was hidden. In America I got on well. But I have done rather badly over here."

"Why did you come to England?"

"In hopes of finding some of my relatives

who might help me. I had a brother living in London, and I was anxious to find him."

"And have you done so?"

"No. But I have not had time or money to spend in looking for him yet. I'm afraid the poor fellow is not much better off than we are ourselves."

"Still it would be a happiness to meet him."

"The greatest I can imagine."

"Then I trust you may find him soon."

"I pray that I may, day and night."

"Then you have only to be patient. God will surely hear your prayer. And now you must stay in this neighborhood for the present. Teach the children to dance, and play for us on the night of the party. Will you do this?"

Mrs. Lyons was overcome with emotion, and her voice was low and full of tears as she answered:

"God bless you. I will, indeed. Your kindness has given me hope and saved me

from despair. My husband is too ill to move on, and there is no chance of my making money on these quiet country roads. So you may imagine how full of gratitude my heart is this moment—so full that I can not tell you what I feel."

"Pray don't try. But little Bunt here is the person you should thank. She," drawing the child to her side, "has a kind and charitable heart, and having fallen in love with your sweet Fay, resolved to help you if she could. Isn't that so, Bunt?"

Bunt blushed to the eyes, and threw her arm round Fay's neck.

"She's such a darling, Mrs. Lonergan," she said. "We all want to be kind to her. Don't we?" turning to the other children. "Every one of us?"

"Yes, indeed, we do," they cried together.

"But we could not have done much without you, mamma," said Clarice.

"No," Bunt laughed. "As Fay told me this morning, 'it's only big people can help

us, not a little boy and girl like you and your brother.' "

"When little boys and girls are kind, thoughtful and unselfish, they can do a great deal," Mrs. Lonergan said, kissing her.

"Indeed they can," Mrs. Lyons cried. "For even a kind word or look from a child gives pleasure and consolation to those in sorrow and misery. So dear little ones, try to be always gentle and kind to the poor—" Her voice broke, and she turned away weeping.

"We will," the children said, their eyes full of sympathy. "We will, indeed."

Mrs. Lonergan took Mrs. Lyons by the hand and led her to an easy chair near the open window. Then turning to the children she said:

"Run away to the school-room now and get your tea. Mrs. Lyons and I will have ours here together and talk over the arrangements for our party. I want to have it as soon as possible, as the Windhams are

going abroad. Clarice, dear, see that your friends get a nice tea."

"Yes, mamma," the little girl replied. "I'll see to that. Come, Fay. I've got many pretty things to show you."

Then with sad, compassionate glances at the weeping lady near the window, the children filed out, and went slowly away to the school-room.

CHAPTER VI.

BUNT AND BILL WRITE A LETTER.

"It's all very well to be kind to pretty Fay, and to help her mother to earn some money," said Bill. "But I'd like to hear of something being done for the poor father."

"It's a doctor he wants." Bunt nodded her head wisely. "The very best doctor in the world."

"Father!" Bill cried, delighted. "There's no one like him. Oh, why doesn't he come home?"

"He's with a poor sick lady, and sleeps at her house every night instead of coming home."

"Does he ever go to Harley Street?"

"During the day to see patients who go to him."

"Could Mr. Lyons go up?"

"No. He faints if he moves much. He's very, very weak."

"It's a bad case." Bill hammered away in silence at a wonderful trunk he was trying to manufacture for Lucy's doll. Dr. Maybank thought it a good thing that every boy should learn a trade, no matter what his rank in life might be, or what profession he meant to take to when he grew up. Bill had a taste for carpentry, and so he had fitted up a little workshop for him, and engaged the village carpenter to give him lessons in his spare hours.

"It is a very bad case, indeed," Bunt said, after a while. She was sitting on a big block of wood with Jingo in her arms and Abbess stretched out asleep among the shavings at her feet. "Mother says she fears there's very little any one can do for him."

"The poor kiddy loves me so. I wish father were at home to try to save his life."

"Yes," Bunt replied. "I wish he were."

Bill whacked hard at a big nail, growing

red all over in his efforts to drive it into its place.

"Mrs. Lyons is very curious about papa," he said, presently, pausing in his work. "She asked me such a lot of questions yesterday about him. She said she was longing to see and speak to him."

"That's because she has heard he is such a clever doctor. I told Fay all he had done, the other morning in the park, so, of course, she wishes to see him and get him to cure her husband."

"Yes—of course. Bunt, I tell you what!" Bill threw down his hammer. "I'll write to papa, and beg him to come home to-morrow evening. That lady could do without him for once. I'll tell him how ill Mr. Lyons is, and you'll see he'll come."

"Capital! Why didn't we think of that before?"

"I really can't say. But better late than never. Come along to the school-room and we'll concoct a letter together."

"Perhaps he won't come. To-morrow is the night of the party, and although Mrs. Lonergan begged him very hard to come and see us in our pretty dresses, he refused."

"He'd do more—give up more to help a poor sick man, than he would to give himself pleasure. I think he'll come if I tell him he's really wanted."

In the school-room Bill sat himself down at a table and got ready his pen, ink, and paper.

"'My dear father,'" he wrote. Then began to suck the top of his penholder, and knit his brows together in deep thought.

"It's hard to put. How shall I tell him what I want, Bunt?"

"Oh, just plain and straight."

"Yes, but how?"

"Like this. 'There's a poor, sick gentleman at Earl's Cottage. He's very, very ill, and Bunt and I want you to come and make him well.' Will that do?"

"First rate. You're a brick. Wait a

moment." Then slowly and with great care Bill wrote what she had told him. "Now," he asked after a time, "what next?"

"'His wife sings and plays and wears a mask, and little Fay dances most beautiful. Mrs. Lyons, that's the lady's name, used to live in America, and she reminds us of you. It sounds funny, but she does. So please, please come.'" She stopped, and Bill looked up.

"Well?"

"That's enough. Father will know from that what we want."

"Of course. It's as clear as day. But I must add this: 'Bunt has told me all what to say—so do come. Come to-morrow night.

"'Your loving son,

"'BILL MAYBANK.'"

"That's a very fine letter," he said, sticking and directing his envelope. "And if I am not very much mistaken, it will bring the pater home at once."

"Yes. He's always ready to do good,

mamma says. So he'll come—he'll come. And if he comes Mr. Lyons will get well." And she hopped gaily up and down the room.

"Now to the post," cried Bill. "Hurrah, hurrah, here come the Lonergans, and I declare the fairy Fay is seated between them! To the post, Bunt, and then for a lively morning in the wigwams. We'll introduce Fay to savage-land, and give her a name." And he ran down the stairs with a hop, skip and a jump.

The preparations for the party, the lessons in dancing, the rehearsals of the procession and the cotillion, kept the children occupied and happy. One day, the Lonergans, several little ones from country houses near, and Fay and Mrs. Lyons would meet at Nightingales and rejoice Mrs. Maybank with a sight of their performance; the next afternoon they would assemble at Maplewood and spend hours there, dancing lancers, quadrilles, and the two-step, and even trying on their dresses.

At last, everything was declared to be perfect. Mrs. Lyons had proved a most efficient teacher, and had not only taught the children the figures and steps, but had also won their hearts. Her gentle ways and sweet manner endeared her to all, and the little ones were only too eager to do exactly what she told them. To the Maybanks she became especially dear, and they were always planning pleasures for her.

"I wish we could make them rich and put them into a nice house, and give them a pony-trap and bath-chair to take Mr. Lyons out in," Bill said one day, as he and Bunt brought Mrs. Lyons and Fay back from Maplewood in the carriage, and dropped them at Earl's Cottage. "A place like that isn't fit for a lady to live in."

"No. But no strangers could make them rich. Mrs. Lyons wouldn't let them."

"No, of course not. But it seems to me jolly hard that some people should be rich and others poor. It doesn't seem fair."

"It must be fair since God has arranged it so," Bunt said, thoughtfully. "Mother says everything He allows is best."

"Yes. But then sometimes He lets poor people get rich. Father used to be very poor. He and his sister had to work so hard, he says, and it took him years to get like he is now."

"I wonder if Aunt Marion got rich, too."

"Oh, that no one knows. Father doesn't even know where she is."

"I'm so sorry. I'd like to know her, and then if she had children they would be our cousins."

Bill laughed gaily.

"Of course they would. And I must say it would be very nice to have some cousins. The Lonergans have simply shoals."

"Yes. And they have lots of uncles and aunts. We have only one aunt, whom we don't know and never saw. Mamma says the world is badly divided. She hadn't any brothers or sisters."

"I call that hard lines. I'm glad there are two of us, Bunt."

"So am I. I wonder if Aunt Marion and Mrs. Lyons ever met out there."

"No, they never did. You forget what a very big place America is."

"No, I don't; but there's always a chance in a big place."

"Oh, yes. But she says she never met any one called Maybank in America."

"Did you ask her?"

"Yes. And she did look strange for a moment. She grew scarlet and then quite pale."

"How funny! But supposing she had met Aunt Marion without knowing her?"

Bill opened his eyes very wide and laughed.

"How could she do that?"

"Quite well. If Aunt Marion were married she would not be called Maybank."

"True. But if that were so, it doesn't matter whether they met or not, as we can

never know. I wonder if papa has had any news lately."

"Not a word. Mamma says he is in very bad spirits."

"Poor papa. He's always wishing he had not put off writing to her for so long."

"Yes. He says if he had only remembered the proverb, 'Never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day,' he'd be happier now."

"Well, let us take a lesson from it all," said Bill, as the carriage stopped at the hall door. "I always want to put off doing things I don't like."

Bunt laughed.

"I'm afraid we're all like that."

"Well, let us be good for to-day, and go at once to our lessons."

Bunt made a wry face.

"Very well. I'm willing." And she sprang up the steps into the house, and followed Bill to the school-room.

As the days went over, their interest in

Mrs. Lyons and Fay increased, and before the end of the week, they felt that they loved them as very old friends, indeed. Then, one afternoon, on going on a message to the cottage, Bill was introduced to Mr. Lyons. The man's pale, sad face, his thin hands and emaciated figure, unlike anything he had ever seen, touched the little boy, and filled him with pity. He thought and wondered what he could do to make him strong, and at last, upon Bunt's declaring that what he required was a good doctor, he wrote the letter we have seen, and carried it off in triumph to the post.

That afternoon came a telegram addressed to Bill from his father.

"Will come to-morrow night if possible."

"Hurrah, hurrah! I knew he would," the boy cried in delight. "We need fret no more about Mr. Lyons now. He'll soon be all right."

CHAPTER VII.

THE KING AND QUEEN OF HEARTS.

It was a great relief to Mrs. Lyons not to be obliged to tramp round the country for several hours a day, playing and singing, and making little Fay dance, and she was more than grateful to the kind ladies who gave her congenial work to do, and paid her well for doing it. But in spite of this improvement in her way of living, in spite of her joy in seeing Fay so happy and beloved, she was often very anxious and sad at heart.

"This can not last," she would say. "And poor Robert does not get well. The air here is excellent, the weather is fine, and for the last few days he has been well fed. Yet I see little or no change in him. And then, in this out-of-the-way, quiet place, I am not likely to get news of poor John.

When I first heard the name Maybank, how my heart jumped. A wild idea flashed across my mind that I had at last found the brother I was looking for. But I soon felt I must be wrong. The great Dr. Maybank of Harley Street and Nightingales is a very different person from John Maybank, of Parson's Green. And yet I longed to see him, till I heard Mrs. Lonergan's account of him. Then I was sure he was a stranger, and resolved to put all thought of him out of my head. Of what use to build castles in the air? Of what use to dream of a happiness that can never come?" She sighed and passed her hand across her eyes. "Had he been at home I might have settled the question at once. For even after all these years of separation, I could not fail to recognize my brother if I saw him. Dear little Bunt and Bill! What faith they have in their father. One word," smiling, "one look from him, would, they believe, be quite sufficient to cure my poor Robert, and make

him well forever. And I am resolved that he shall have that look, that word, before long. I have not much money," she took a box from the table drawer and counted the shillings it contained, "but I will soon have enough to pay his fee. So when the party is over, and Mrs. Lonergan gives me the three guineas promised, I'll go boldly to Nightingales, and ask to see the doctor. I'll tell him my story, explain my difficulties, and beg him to visit my poor husband. If he is at all like his wife and children he will not refuse, and for the small sum I can offer him he will surely undertake the case, and do all he can to restore poor Robert to health."

Consoled by this thought Mrs. Lyons managed to rouse her spirits, and to throw herself into the work of teaching and training her little pupils with great zest and interest. Their progress delighted her, and their love and affection comforted and consoled her.

"If only things were just a little wee bit better with us, and Robert on the way to recovery, I could be very happy here," she would tell herself. "Such kind friends, such love and attention are very, very sweet."

So the time passed, and at last, the evening of the great party came round. The children were in wild spirits all day. They were in the house and out of the house, round the farm-yard and into the wigwams, but could not rest in one place, or at one thing, for more than a few moments together.

Bill's telegram was read and re-read. The secret of his father's return was known only to him and Bunt. He would not even tell his mother.

"It will only be a pleasant surprise for her," he said, when his sister remonstrated and begged him to tell Mrs. Maybank. "And I like to keep the exact hour of his coming a secret. It is more fun. His

dressing-room is always ready, because he might come any evening, so it does not matter. But, oh, I feel wild with joy when I think that we shall see him to-night, and be able to tell him all about Mr. Lyons. Between that, and the fun of the party, I feel quite off my head."

"You look it," said Bunt, laughing. "I never saw you so excited."

"Because I never was so wild before. It's so lovely to think that soon we'll have made Fay and her father and mother quite happy, that I can't help feeling delighted."

As Mrs. Lyons stood dressed for the party that evening in a long gown of black brocade, some soft white chiffon folded across her breast, a bunch of red roses fastened on the front of her bodice, a flush of pleasure in her fair face, her brown hair drawn up in thick loops and coils on the top of her head, her husband gazed at her in delight.

"I have altered the dress well," she said, smiling. "Mrs. Maybank will be surprised

to see how nicely it fits. It was kind of her to give it to me."

"Very. And, my darling, you are looking like your old self. That," he heaved a deep sigh, "is the way you should always be dressed. It reminds me of the days gone by, before I became the helpless creature I am now."

Tears sprang to her eyes, and she bent and kissed him tenderly.

"Those days, or something very like them, will come again, Robert. We have found good friends. They will help us in every way they can. To-morrow I will tell Mrs. Lonergan my whole family history. Her husband is a lawyer, and he will, I feel sure, help me to discover poor John. That is," sighing, "if he is living."

"At first, I used to dream that this rich Dr. Maybank was your brother, love."

She laughed softly, and pressed his hand.

"So used I. But they were foolish dreams. We are not likely to find John at

the top of the tree like this gentleman. He may be in a very different position, my poor Robert, when we do find him."

He sighed heavily and raised her hand to his lips.

"When we do find him! Poor Marion, you still hope to do so?"

"God is good," she said reverently. "I still hope. And so must you."

"I will try. But I confess I find it hard to do so."

"That I can understand," gazing at him sadly. "But you must not lose heart, dear love. 'Tis the unexpected that happens, remember, and any day some lucky chance may bring John to our very door."

He smiled and caressed her hand.

"Your courage is wonderful. And now, what is keeping Fay? Her toilet appears to be a lengthy one."

Mrs. Lyons' face lit up with pleasure, and she laughed brightly.

"I should just think it is. Biddy and

she have been hours over it. They examine each article before putting it on, discuss and admire the make and the shape at great length. So naturally, the dressing takes a long time. Biddy is almost beside herself with excitement. She never saw such finery in her life before. Her exclamations of delight are most amusing, and her compliments are enough to turn our darling's head. You must be careful, for I promise you the sight of our little Queen of Hearts will fairly take your breath away."

"She will be very lovely, I'm sure. I must paint her in the dress," glancing sadly at the unfinished portrait of his darling upon the easel, and sighing, "when I am stronger."

"Yes, dear. She and her companion cards, Bunt and Bill, would make a charming picture, and we might give it to Mrs. Maybank. Her kindness to our darling Fay is wonderful."

"It will be the first thing I do," he cried

eagerly. "I long to begin the picture at once. But hark! Is that not her gracious majesty arriving?"

The patter of little feet, the sound of merry laughter, quickly suppressed, was heard in the passage. Then came a moment of silence, followed by a few whispered words, and the door was flung open, and Fay, a radiant and dazzling figure, tripped into the room, and across the floor to her father's sofa.

"My little Queen of Hearts, I kiss your hand," Mr. Lyons cried, raising himself upon his pillow and carrying the child's hand to his lips.

But this did not please little Fay, and turning, she threw her arms round his neck, and laid her cheek against his.

"Isn't it lovely, daddy? Did you ever see such a frock?"

"Never outside fairyland," he answered, laughing. "Did the queen of the fairies lend it to you, sweetheart?"

"No. It is my very own. Made for me by Mrs. Lonergan's French maid."

"Then she must be related to the fairies."

"She may have had a few lessons in dress-making from them," the child answered gravely. "And I do believe she had, for it looks like fairy work."

Then telling Biddy to spread out her train, she raised her pretty head and strutted up and down the room, gracefully waving a white feather fan, as she peeped back over her shoulders to see what her father thought of her finery.

"It's perfect," he cried. "From the golden crown on your flowing curls to the tip of your little white satin slipper, it's perfect. You're a charming Queen, my Fay. I trust your King may be worthy to walk with you."

"Of course. Why, Bill is my King, papa," she cried, swinging round again. "He is a perfectly delightful King, I assure you."

He laughed, and held out his hand. "I

can quite believe that. I am very fond of Master Bill myself."

"Every one is. He teases a little sometimes, but he's very kind."

Mr. Lyons lay back upon his pillow, noting every detail of the child's pretty dress and figure.

And certainly the whole thing was a triumph of art. The frock and train were of white satin embroidered in gold, and bordered with small hearts worked in soft red silk. The bodice was trimmed with jewels; the crown, small and light, was of filigree gold lace, mounted upon some marvelously fine and invisible wire.

"It's charming to look at, but for dancing and romping I fear it will be inconvenient," Mr. Lyons said after a time. "The train and fan will be in your way, little one."

"Ah, my clever papa, you don't know how these things are done." She made him a sweeping curtsy. "The fan is to be laid

aside. So also is the train. Immediately after the procession, we all go to the dressing-room, and in a minute these things are taken away from us, and we are free to hop and skip and dance as we please. We dance through a game of Old Maid, and romp round in a game of Poker. Oh, it will be a lovely time! I'm just longing to begin."

"Well, then, you'd better be off. Has the fly come?"

Fay drew herself up.

"The Queen of Hearts in a fly? My dear papa, are you dreaming?"

He laughed.

"No, dear. But unless Biddy wheels you to Maplewood in the hand cart, I don't see—"

"You don't see—of course not." Fay danced over and kissed him lightly on the forehead. "But you forget how kind the Maybanks are, and that they keep a carriage. Bunt and Bill ought to be here by now. It is late."

"Are they really coming to fetch you?"

"Yes. They are anxious to show themselves to you, and to drive us to Maplewood."

"The dear, thoughtful children." He spoke with emotion. "I will indeed be glad to see them, though I confess to feeling a little tired."

"Poor papa! I was afraid you would be done up. But you must take a peep at Bunt. She is the Queen of Clubs, as she is dark, and she does look sweet. But hark! I'm sure I heard the carriage."

Fay flew across to the window, her satin train streaming behind her, and catching in chairs and tables as she went along.

"Dear heart! Musha, sure the satin will be soiled and crumpled, not fit to be seen," shrieked Biddy, in an agony lest the lovely train should be injured. "Be careful, alanna. Do look where you're goin'."

The little girl laughed, and pulled the train up over her arm.

"Don't be alarmed, Bid, it's all right. And I must say it is rather a nuisance. I'm glad I don't always wear a train."

She raised the blind and peered out into the moonlit road. A carriage and pair stood at the door, and soon the sound of merry voices and peals of laughter announced who its occupants were.

"Here they are. Oh, what bundles they look!" Fay cried, as she saw the footman assist Bunt and Bill to alight.

"To be sure they are well wrapped up, and so you will be presently, asthore," remarked Biddy, and she went into the passage to help the children to take off their cloaks. "Musha, you're just lovely," she said. "And the poor masther'll be delighted."

"I hope he will," began Bill. "Because—"

"Come in, come in," interrupted Fay, running out to meet them. "We are quite ready, and papa is just longing to see you. He thinks me lovely."

"Is he well enough? Shall we not tire him too much?" asked Bunt in a whisper.

"Oh, I think not. A little excitement does him good," Fay replied gaily. "If you don't stay too long, the sight of you will raise his spirits."

"We must pay him a very short visit. Mother is waiting for us all."

"Oh, won't she come in?" Fay cried. "Do ask her to come in."

"No, no. It wouldn't do." Bill laid his hand on the child's arm. "Please don't ask her. She says invalids should never be allowed to see strangers, and she knows, for she's a doctor's wife, remember."

"Yes." Fay looked up quickly. "And when is your father coming home, Bill? I'm longing for him to come."

"So are we," Bunt said, kissing her. "And we think, we hope, he'll be here before long."

Bill looked at his sister with flashing eyes, and put his finger to his lips.

"I've said nothing I oughtn't to say," she whispered. "That's not telling our secret. And you know, after all, it's not likely he'll come to-night."

"All the more reason for saying nothing. And I am disappointed. All the joy of the happy surprise I thought was in store for them is gone. He won't come to-night, I'm sure."

"Well, it's not his fault, you may—"

"I never said it was. But stop talking about it. It's rude to whisper before Fay. And it makes me sorry when I think of how nice it would be if he had been with us now. Well, my Queen of Hearts," turning to pretty Fay, "please take your King in, and introduce him to your father."

"With the greatest of pleasure," Fay cried, throwing the door open. "Give me your hand, Bill, and we'll walk in like a real King and Queen."

"I'll give you my hand," Bill laughed. "But I haven't the faintest idea how real

Kings walk. You will of course trip in like a fairy queen. However, come along. I'll do my best to look like a King." And straightening himself, he laid one hand on his sword, the other on Fay's slim little fingers, and led her into the room.

Mr. Lyons was looking very white and worn, but a smile of pleasure passed over his face as the pretty trio entered, and approached his sofa.

"You are charming," he said, in a low, weak voice, "all three, and I hope you will enjoy yourselves. I wish," sighing, "I could go with you. But you see, I am a prisoner. My legs are no use to me, and so I have to lie here while you dance and make merry."

"I'm so sorry," said Bill, a shadow crossing his bonnie face. "Were you very fond of dancing, Mr. Lyons?"

The sick man laughed.

"Very," he answered. "And do you know, I used to dance very well."

Bill sighed, and looked at him sadly.

"Then it's a great pity you're not strong. Mrs. Lonergan's longing for men who can dance," he remarked. "Papa's no good, even if he were here, and Mr. Lonergan's worse. He is 'like a bull in a china shop,' his wife says, in a ball-room. And I take after papa. I try very hard, but I always get into the middle of the room, and stick there, and then my partner, Lucy, or Bunt, or Clarice, gets angry, and sometimes runs and leaves me. One day Lucy boxed my ears."

Mr. Lyons was much amused, but did not like to laugh lest he should hurt the boy's feelings.

"That must have been very trying," he said gravely. "I trust," turning to his little daughter, "that you will never treat your handsome young King in such a way, my bonnie Queen of Hearts. It would be most unseemly."

Fay blushed, and opened and shut her fan,

as she peeped from under her long lashes at Bill. Then a smile hovered round the corners of her mouth, and a delicious little dimple showed itself in each cheek.

"I'm afraid I sometimes push him away when he dances all out of time, daddy. Don't I, Bill?"

"I should think so. You're not over polite when I step on your toe or push you up against a table. But you're not half as cross as Lucy, although you dance so well."

"The Queen of Hearts must keep her temper," Mr. Lyons said, smiling. "Every one is not the nimble fairy she is."

"I should think not," Bill cried. "And it is no wonder she hates dancing with me. I'm a horrible partner. I'm no good as a dancer, and never shall be, and I didn't want to learn one bit. I only agreed to do so because I wanted to be Fay's King to-night."

"That's charming. So you must be kind to him, after that, my sweet Fay, and help him as much as you can."

"Oh, yes, daddy, of course. And then Bill walks beautifully in the procession, and he's very good at Poker and Old Maid." Fay laughed merrily. "They are such lovely romps. Eh, Bill?"

"Glorious." He hopped up and down the room, till suddenly his sword went between his legs and threw him flat upon his face on the floor.

"What a fall was there, my countrymen," cried Mr. Lyons, laughing. "My dear boy, how are you going to dance? If you prostrate yourself in that fashion in the ballroom, it will be unpleasant for every one."

"It was my sword did that," said Bill, jumping up and rubbing his knees. "I forgot all about it. But we take off all these extra things before the dancing begins."

"That's very lucky. Otherwise I fear there would be some terrible scenes. The trains and swords and fans would cause a glorious confusion."

The children laughed, and in the midst of

the merriment, Mrs. Lyons noticed that her husband looked weary and exhausted.

"I must get them away at once," she thought, "or he'll have one of his fainting fits."

Bunt stole up to her, and slipped her little hand into hers.

"Will you come, Mrs. Lyons, please? Mother will be tired waiting."

"Waiting? Is Mrs. Maybank waiting?"

"Yes, in the carriage."

"Then, indeed, we must go. Come, children, quick. Good-night, Robert. Biddy, see that the master has his beef-tea at once."

And putting on her own cloak, and rolling Fay up in a big shawl, she swept the children out of the cottage and into the carriage.

Mrs. Maybank welcomed them gladly.

"I thought you were never coming," she said. "You must have tired Mr. Lyons by staying so long."

"He was delighted to see them," Mrs.

Lyons answered. "So delighted that I did not like to hurry them away too soon. But I am very sorry to have kept you waiting. I did not know till a moment ago that you were in the carriage. Pray forgive me."

"There is nothing to forgive. I was quite happy. But I was uneasy lest they should tire your husband. How is he to-night?"

"This is one of his good days, and he was interested and amused to see the little ones in their fancy dresses. But," sighing heavily, "he does not gain strength. It is his heart, I fear, and the small airless rooms of the cottage try him severely."

Mrs. Maybank glanced at the graceful figure by her side, and as the soft rays of the moon fell upon Mrs. Lyons' fair, sad face, she felt deeply touched, and full of pity for her in her anxiety and trouble.

"I wonder who and what these people are," she thought. "And what has reduced them to such poverty. She is a lady in the truest sense of the word. Yet her mode of

making money is a strange one. I would like to know her story. That she has suffered and still suffers, is very evident." Then turning to Mrs. Lyons, she laid her hand gently on hers, saying, "Don't fret about your husband. He is not as ill as you fear. I trust. When Dr. Maybank comes back he will see what he can do for him."

"Thank you. That is what I am hoping. When will he be back?"

"I hardly know. He has been delayed by some important business, or he would have been here for this party. He was most anxious to see the children in their pretty dresses."

"A doctor is not always master of his time," said Mrs. Lyons.

"This is not professional business. The lady he was attending in the country is almost quite well. But some important news of a friend for whom he has long been looking reached him just at the last moment, and delayed his arrival."

Bill sat up in his corner on the back seat of the carriage and seized his mother's hand.

"When did you hear that? Are you sure he won't come to-night?"

"Quite sure. His letter yesterday morning said he could not come to-night."

"Yesterday morning! That's old news," cried Bill. "My telegram came after that."

"Your telegram? Did he telegraph to you?" asked Mrs. Maybank, in astonishment.

"Yes. I've let out my secret, but," laughing, "it doesn't matter after all. Bunt and I were anxious to get him to cure Mr. Lyons as soon as possible. So I wrote (Bunt told me what to say, for I'm an awful duffer at letter-writing), begging him to come as soon as ever he could, and he wired to me, mother, promising to be here to-night if he possibly could. I know my father, and I'm sure he'll come. So cheer up, Mrs. Lyons. There's a good time coming for you."

Mrs. Lyons' eyes filled with tears, and she pressed the little boy's hand tightly within her own.

"God bless you," she said in a voice full of emotion. "You and Bunt are the kindest and most thoughtful children I ever knew. I am longing to see Dr. Maybank and hear his opinion of my dear husband. I have heard so much of his cleverness that I feel sure he will cure him."

"I am convinced he will," cried Bill.

"I have longed to get some good advice for Robert. But then I was so poor that I could not pay the fees," said Mrs. Lyons sadly. "And I had so few—in fact, no friends in England, till I met you."

"Papa loves to help poor people," said Bill. "He was once very poor himself, and often tells us how he had to work to get on. Doesn't he, mamma?"

"Yes, dear. And he's very proud that he has done so. He began with hardly a friend in the world. But, thank God, he made

plenty, and is very rich in that respect at present."

"Every one loves papa," Bunt said softly. "And I am sure you will do the same, Mrs. Lyons, when you know him."

"If he's anything like his children, Bunt and Bill," she answered smiling, "I'm sure I shall."

"Oh, he's ten times nicer than we are," they cried in a breath. "Just wait till you see."

The carriage drove in through the big gates of Maplewood, and as they went up the long avenue of limes, brilliantly lighted for the occasion with gaily colored Chinese lanterns, the children became highly excited, and forgetting Dr. Maybank and his many charms and virtues, they cheered and clapped their hands noisily.

"Hurrah, hurrah!" cried Bill. "It's like fairyland."

"Much you know," laughed Bunt. "You've never been there. What do you

say, our fairy queen?" turning to Fay, who was gazing out of the carriage in delight. "Is it like the lovely land you have been accustomed to?"

"I never saw anything half so nice before," the child answered gravely. "And oh, oh!"—clasping her hands together in an ecstasy of joy, as the carriage stopped at the hall-door and she caught sight of the dazzling scene within the house, "isn't that perfectly exquisite?"

"Perfectly," cried Bunt. "I must say the Lonergans may well be proud of this."

"And they will," laughed Bill. "There'll be no standing Lucy. Between her delight in her dress as Queen of Spades, her pride in the rooms, and her delight in having that chap Leonard O'Brien to dance with, she won't have a word for me, her oldest friend."

Bunt laughed gaily.

"I hope the Knave of Hearts will give me a dance. Leonard is the best partner we've got."

"Because he's tall and big, and can steer well, you girls all like him," Bill said, with an impatient shrug of his shoulders. "But he's too old for you, Bunt. He's quite fourteen."

"Age doesn't matter," Bunt replied. "He knows his steps and has a good ear for music. You have no ear, Bill, and I am sorry to say you don't know your steps."

"Well, you needn't jeer at a fellow for that. It's not my fault that I don't know one tune from another, and can't keep time. I don't pretend to be a dancer."

"You couldn't do that, my poor boy."

"You're certainly not encouraging," sighed Bill. "I suppose I shall have to stand in a corner or do wall-flower on a bench all night. You'll all turn up your dainty noses at poor me."

Fay slipped her little hand into his.

"I will dance with you, Bill," she said sweetly. "You are my King, and I'll waltz with you just as often as you like."

"You darling." Bill gave her a hearty kiss. "Then I don't care who dances with Leonard O'Brien, not one bit." And as the little girl was lifted out of the carriage, he followed her gaily into the hall.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN UNEXPECTED ENDING.

THE procession was over and the dancing had not yet begun. The kings, queens, knaves, aces, and in fact all of the fifty-two children representing the various cards in a pack, tripped up and down over the shining parquet, showing off their sumptuous dresses to their admiring mothers and friends. It was a pretty scene. The beautiful, lofty rooms were brilliantly lighted. Banks of flowers and tall palms stood in every corner. Wreaths of roses hung down round the doorways and mirrors, and were looped gracefully from window to window, over the gold-colored brocade curtains.

"My friends, listen." Clarice, looking quite tall and stately as Queen of Diamonds, clapped her hands to attract the attention of

the excited children. "For one quarter of an hour you may strut about and show trains and swords, then when you hear the gong in the hall, please go into the dressing-room and lay aside these most troublesome things and proceed to the dining-room. Here a good half hour will be allowed for tea, and then we come back and dance. I trust this programme pleases you all."

"Yes, yes," the children cried, then strolled off in twos and threes round the spacious rooms and into the conservatory.

Mrs. Lyons, whose services were not required till after tea, now that the procession was over, sat in a big armchair at the end of the room, watching the quaint and wonderful figures of some of the little ones with considerable amusement.

"It's a pretty and quaint fancy, the whole thing," she thought. "And some of the children carry their rich costumes with a good deal of grace. But none so well as my sweet Fay. Where is she, I wonder? In

some pleasant place with her beloved Bunt and Bill. I am not sure that I am right in allowing her to take part in such festivities, to see and enjoy so much luxury. Ah, well, it can do little harm now. At her age it can not matter, and later on, she will have hardships and trials enough, poor lamb, unless— But what is the matter with Bill? He looks strangely excited. I hope," springing to her feet, "no accident has happened to— Bill," she cried, as the little boy ran past her, his cheeks burning, his eyes blazing with excitement, "what is wrong?"

Bill sprang back and caught her hand.

"I nearly missed you, and I have been looking for you all round the rooms. Fay is with Bunt and Clarice, and nothing is wrong," he cried, and the joyful ring in his voice set her heart at rest at once. "In fact, everything is as right and as happy as can be. My father has just arrived."

She put her hand quickly to her forehead, and sank back into her chair.

"Your father? Dr. Maybank here? Oh, Bill." A sob choked her, and her heart began to throb wildly. "Is he, my child? Really?"

Bill laughed and chuckled with delight.

"I guessed you'd be surprised and overjoyed. But I knew he was coming. You heard me telling mother in the carriage that I had written to beg him to come as soon as he could, and that he had telegraphed that he would arrive this evening. Then he didn't appear, and I was beginning to be disappointed and feel afraid that he had not been able to get away after all. Still, deep down, I believed he would turn up some time to-night. And so, just as I was going across the hall to leave my sword in the dressing-room the door opened, and in he walked. Dear father, I was glad. And now," he continued, breathlessly, "he wants to see you. He's not in evening dress, as he has not had time to change, so he will not come in among the guests here. He has gone to Mrs. Lon-

ergan's boudoir, and is waiting for you to come to him there. He wants to ask you all kinds of questions about Mr. Lyons. So do come."

"Yes, dear boy." She was very white. The meeting with Dr. Maybank might mean a great deal to her. Doctors knew each other, she told herself, and he might be able to give her news of her brother. And then his visit to her husband, his verdict as to his condition, and the hopes he would give her of his recovery, were all so important that she longed for, yet dreaded, her first interview with him.

"Well," cried Bill, catching her hand, "what are you looking so startled about? Father's very kind."

"I'm sure he is. But you see, I must stay and play for the dancing. That is what I am here for."

Bill laughed gaily.

"After tea you must play. But that won't be over for an age. You have lots of

time to tell father all about Mr. Lyons and arrange when he is to visit him. So come along." And he dragged her out of the drawing-room, and down the beautifully decorated hall to the boudoir.

On a low seat under a big spreading palm, Dr. Maybank leaned back rather wearily. He was feeling tired and depressed, and even the soft touch of his little daughter's arms round his neck, her cheek gently laid against his, could not raise his drooping spirits.

"All my efforts—all my inquiries have been in vain," he said to his wife, who stood watching him with anxious eyes. "And I have lost heart. I shall never find Marion now. I am full of remorse for my careless unkindness and wicked thoughtlessness in putting off writing to her. My neglect of what was a positive duty is the cause of all this. Take warning, my pet," he kissed Bunt's rosy cheek, "and never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day. It is an admirable motto."

"Yes, papa, I'll try to," Bunt whispered. "And Bill says he will, too."

Dr. Maybank smiled and caressed her soft dark hair.

"That's right, my queen. And now let us cheer up. I don't wish to spoil your pleasant party with my gloomy looks and words. As soon as I have seen this Mrs. Lyons, I'll go home. What a strange fancy you have all taken to this woman and her child. She is, I presume, quite a lady, since you, my dear," looking up at his wife, "and the fastidious Mrs. Lonergan have taken her so completely to your hearts. Yet a strolling player, wearing a mask, was a somewhat doubtful person to take into the family as you have done."

Mrs. Maybank laughed softly.

"So we often say. But you see the little one attracted the children, and as we always like to encourage them to be kind and charitable to every one, we did not interfere. When we saw and spoke to Mrs. Lyons we

rejoiced greatly that we had done nothing to stop their friendship with sweet Fay. She is a noble Catholic, unselfish and devoted, and, as you will see in a moment, as true a lady as ever you met. She is poor; lodges in a poor cottage, and works and struggles to keep her invalid husband and child from starvation. No one can fail to admire her. When you meet her, you will, I am sure, agree that we were right in allowing the children to know and help her all they could."

"I am sure I shall. You always do right, dearest. And this woman must be a noble creature. But why doesn't she come? The time is passing," taking out his watch, "and I have had no dinner yet."

"You might stay and have supper. Mrs. Lonergan would excuse your morning dress."

"I am not in spirits for a party," he said. "Now that I have seen Bunt and Bill in their finery, I have had enough, and long to get back to my books. Only for Bill's letter I'd have stayed in town to-night."

"I'm glad you came. The child is deeply interested in these people, and very anxious to get your advice for Mr. Lyons."

"I like to encourage him to help his fellow creatures. Mr. Lyons shall have my best attention."

The door opened, and Bill ran in, saying in an almost triumphant tone, "Here is Mrs. Lyons, father. She was afraid there wasn't time to talk to you. But there's plenty. The tea hasn't begun yet."

As Mrs. Lyons crossed the room, her slender form looking lady-like and graceful in her long black dress, her sweet face a little flushed in her nervous trepidation at meeting the great physician, Dr. Maybank started, and grew red, then pale.

"Am I—dreaming?" He put Bunt off his knee, and rising, went quickly toward Mrs. Lyons. "I am glad—very glad to meet you."

"And I—" She raised her eyes to his, gave a sudden gasp, and looked at him closely

—inquiringly; then uttered a little cry and caught his hand.

"John—oh, John! It must be—it surely is you. I can not be mistaken. God and Our Blessed Lady have heard my prayers. It is you."

"Marion—my beloved sister—at last!" He threw his arms round her and drew her head upon his breast. "Oh, how I have longed, hoped, prayed for this hour."

"And I—oh, John, I have prayed fervently and sought you everywhere."

"You have suffered, Marion, all these years?"

"No, not all. I married my dear husband eight years ago, and so long as his health was good all went well. But he fell ill, and for some time has been unable to work. I wrote to you over and over again, John, but could never get any reply. Then, in desperation, I resolved to come and look for you. A friend helped me to pay our passage money; Biddy paid her own; and

since landing in England we have just been able to live by what we earned—Fay by her dancing, I by my singing."

"Now all your troubles are over, dearest. Care and good nourishment will soon make your husband well again."

She smiled happily.

"And good doctoring. There is a great doctor here, to-night, Bunt and Bill's father, who has promised to see him, they tell me. Do you know him, John? His name is the same as ours. Isn't it odd? And he's wonderfully clever."

"My dearest, I thought you knew. I am the doctor, Bunt and Bill's father."

"You? Oh, John! Will the surprises never cease? Have you really made a name for yourself like that?"

"I really have. I think without conceit I may say that I am right at the top of the tree. But I've been writing to you and telling you how I was getting on, for a long time."

"I never got your letters. I changed so often—left place after place. Ah, John, I have had a hard time. Even since my marriage my life has been a trying one, though Robert is the best of men."

"Your troubles are over, dearest, now. But it is no wonder we found it difficult to discover each other. I had no idea you had married, and we both lived in many different places. You never thought of looking among the big wigs of Harley Street for your poor brother?"

"No, indeed. But thank God we have found each other at last."

"Amen to that. Janet," turning to his wife, "this is Marion. Thanks to you and our sweet children, I have found her. Your love and charity have been rewarded."

"This is indeed an unexpected joy," Mrs. Maybank cried, kissing the trembling woman. "But you must thank Bunt and Bill, after God, for your happiness. Only for them the masked lady and her pretty

child might have passed away and been forgotten."

"Bunt and Bill!" Mrs. Lyons caught them to her, and they threw their arms round her neck. "God bless you for all your love and kindness." And her tears ran down like rain as she bent to kiss the delighted children.

"And now," said Mrs. Maybank, after a moment or two, "let us go and look for Fay, our pretty Queen of Hearts."

And wishing to leave the brother and sister alone for a while, she led the children away.

* * * * *

Dr. Maybank's opinion of his brother-in-law was a consoling one. He was weak and would require great care, he said, but there was no real disease, and he was quite confident that he would soon be well and strong again. The first and most important thing in a case like his, he declared, was good air, large rooms, and nourishing diet. To find

all this in a poor little roadside cottage was of course impossible, and so he hurried the invalid into his carriage, and drove him off to Nightingales at once.

That evening, Mrs. Lyons, Fay, and Biddy followed with the luggage, and very hearty was the welcome they received when arriving at the beautiful old house.

"You must make this your home till your husband is well and earning a good income, dearest Marion," Dr. Maybank said, looking at her with loving eyes. "It will be a joy to us to have you, and make you happy."

She pressed his hand; her heart was too full for words.

"And the little one?" he asked, after a pause. "She loves us, and will, I think, be glad to remain."

A peal of merry laughter was heard in the garden, and from the window they saw the children running hand in hand across the lawn.

"Yes," she answered brightly, her eyes

following her little daughter's fairy form. "Fay will be glad to stay with you. She is always very happy with her beloved cousins, Bunt and Bill."

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